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THE CHILDREN'S BOOK OF CHRISTMAS



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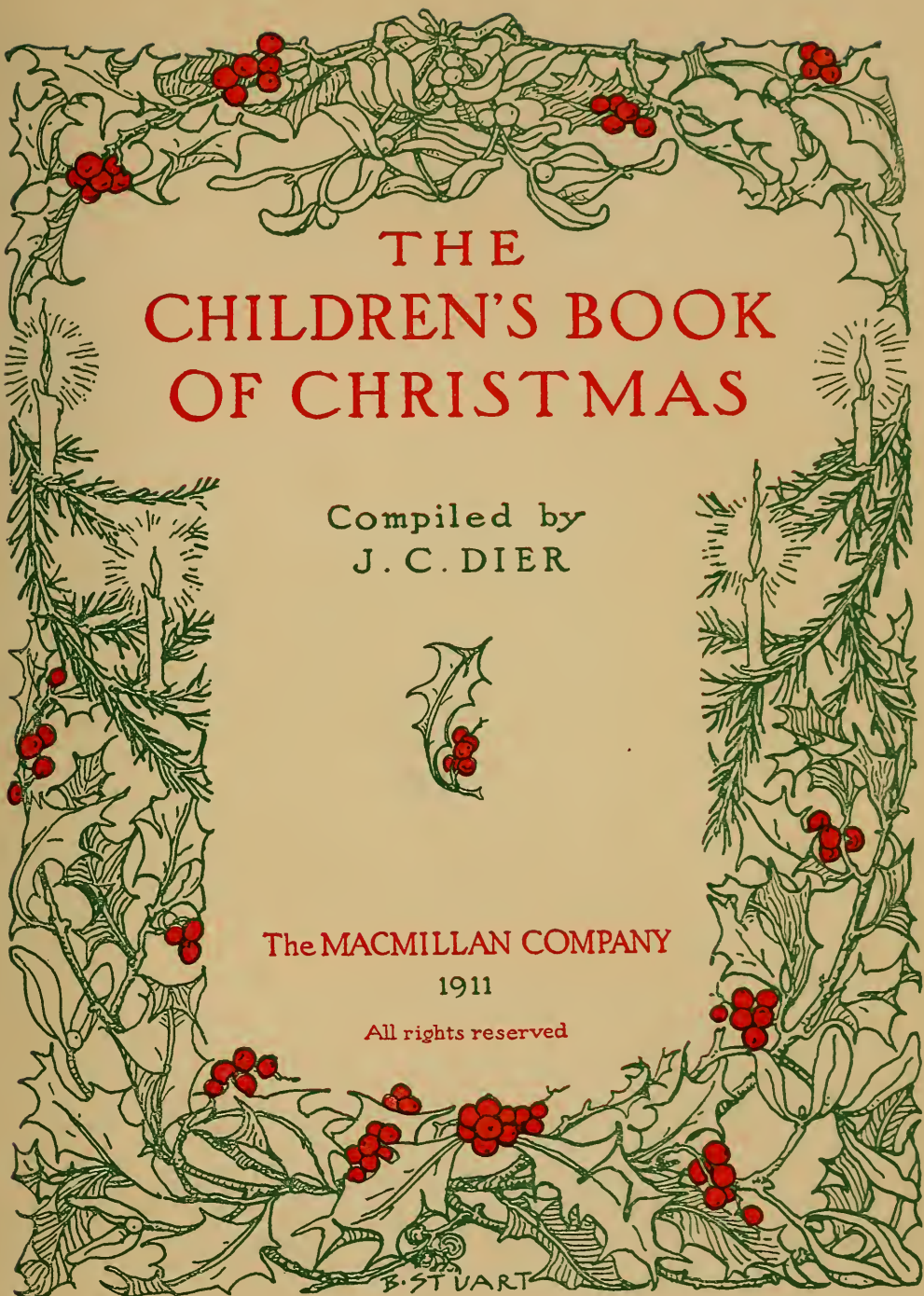
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THE CHILDREN'S BOOK OF CHRISTMAS

Compiled by
J. C. DIER

The MACMILLAN COMPANY

1911

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IS THERE A SANTA CLAUS?

[*This question addressed to The Sun, New York, received this reply.*]

WE take pleasure in answering at once and thus prominently the communication below, expressing at the same time our great gratification that its faithful author is numbered among the friends of The Sun:—

Dear Editor: I am 8 years old.

Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus.

Papa says, "If you see it in The Sun it's so."

Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus?

VIRGINIA O'HANLON.

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been afflicted by the scepticism of a sceptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance, to make tolerable this existence. We should

have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies. You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders that are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You may tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

FRANK P. CHURCH.



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COMPILER'S NOTE

WHEREVER it has been possible, the material used has been quoted in the exact words of the writer. In some cases omissions have been made of sentences which would be unintelligible because that part of the original book to which they refer is not herein included. In a very few cases where the books quoted were not written for children, the selections have been condensed and the language simplified. It is hoped that injustice has been done to none.



THE CHILDREN'S BOOK OF CHRISTMAS

Christmas Greens

It is hard for you who have never felt the lack of heat and light to know what the long dark winter must have meant to the men of long ago who first kept the midwinter feast. Many of them really believed that as the days grew shorter and shorter, and the nights long and cold, there was danger that the sun might go out altogether and the whole world die in the darkness. When, late in December, the days began to lengthen, and they saw that the sun was coming back to bring again the flowers and the summer heat, they fancied that a new sun had been born. So then for gladness they kept a feast which naturally in later years was changed into a festival in honor of the birth of Christ, "the sun of righteousness."

With the feast itself some other of their old customs have been handed down to us, and among them is that of bringing into the house in midwinter the boughs of Christmas green. For these far-away folk believed that wood-spirits—you know them as brownies, fairies, and elves—were living in the forests outside, and were so sorry to think of them shivering under the snow-laden trees and in damp icy caves, that they used to place in the corners of their houses great branches of hemlock and balsam fir, that "the good little people" might creep into

the sort of shelters they loved and be warm. And as the heat of the fire brought out the sweet smell of the fir, it seemed to them like a "thank you" from their friends of the summer woods. Thus they, first of all men, felt the wish to *give* which is the heart of the Christmas spirit. And soon they began to hang little gifts for their unseen guest upon the green boughs, and to make them bright with the berries of holly and ash. After that it may be that some night hunter, crouching in the underbrush, looked up to the stars, and felt that his tree was incomplete without twinkling lights. However that may be, the custom of trimming the house with evergreens, holly, and lights at Christmas time is an old, old one.

I saw Three Ships come sailing in

I SAW three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
I saw three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas day in the morning.

And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day?
And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas day in the morning?

The Virgin Mary and Christ were there,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
The Virgin Mary and Christ were there,
On Christmas day in the morning.

Pray, whither sailed those ships all three,
 On Christmas day, on Christmas day?
Pray, whither sailed those ships all three,
 On Christmas day in the morning?

O they sailed into Bethlehem,
 On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
O they sailed into Bethlehem,
 On Christmas day in the morning.

And all the bells on earth shall ring,
 On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
And all the bells on earth shall ring,
 On Christmas day in the morning.

And all the Angels in Heaven shall sing,
 On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
And all the Angels in Heaven shall sing,
 On Christmas day in the morning.

And all the souls on earth shall sing,
 On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
And all the souls on earth shall sing,
 On Christmas day in the morning.

Then let us all rejoice amain,
 On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
Then let us all rejoice amain,
 On Christmas day in the morning.

The Angels and the Shepherds

Now in the days of Herod, King of Judea, the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city in Galilee named Nazareth, unto a virgin whose name was Mary, to whom he said: Hail, thou that art highly favored! the Lord is with thee! blessed art thou among women! But she was greatly troubled by his greeting and wondered what such words could mean. Fear not, Mary! for thou hast found favor with God, he said, and went on to tell her of the Son who should be hers, and whom she was to call Jesus. He shall be great, she was told, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Now it came to pass there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled. And all went to enroll themselves, every one to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house of the family of David; to enroll himself with Mary. And it came to pass, while they were there she brought forth her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the

Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you; ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying:

Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace
Among men in whom he is well pleased.

And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. And when they saw it they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this child. And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them.

And when eight days were fulfilled his name was called
JESUS.

While Shepherds Watched

WHILE shepherds watch'd their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The Angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

"Fear not," said he (for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind);
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.

"To you in David's town this day
Is born of David's line
The Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
And this shall be the sign:

"The heavenly Babe you there shall find
To human view display'd,
All meanly wrapt in swathing-bands;
And in a manger laid."

Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
Appear'd a shining throng
Of angels praising God, and thus
Address'd their joyful song:

"All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace;
Good-will henceforth from heaven to men
Begin, and never cease!"

The Wise Men from the East

Now when Jesus was born, behold, Wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him. And when Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet: *And thou Bethlehem, land of Judah, art in no wise least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come forth a governor, which shall be shepherd of my people Israel.* Then Herod privily called the Wise men, and learned of them carefully what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search out carefully concerning the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word that I also may come and worship him. And they, having heard the king, went their way; and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary his mother; and they fell down and worshipped him; and opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Now when they were departed, behold an angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I tell thee: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. And he arose and took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the Wise men was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the male children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had carefully learned of the Wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: *A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she would not be comforted, because they are not.*

But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead that sought the young child's life. And he arose and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither; and being warned of God in a dream, he withdrew into the parts of Galilee, and came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, that he should be called a Nazarene.

Strooiavond in Holland

A DUTCH boy does not have to wait until December 25 for the great gift-day of the year. He is one of those who look for the gift-bringing saint on the eve of his own day which falls on December 6. For days beforehand the shops have been filled with toys and gaily trimmed, and on the evening of December 5 St. Nicholas is supposed by the little ones to make choice of the special treasure intended for little Dutch Jan or Martje. Indeed, it is one of the children's treats to go out on that night to see the shops; and in the doorway of many of them stands a gorgeously clad likeness of the saint.

At home the children in turn are visited by the saint; in he walks carrying a big sackful of candies, oranges, apples, and so forth, which he scatters on the floor. Indeed, the Eve of St. Nicholas is called in Holland *Strooiavond*, which means "strewing evening." This idea of a strewing evening crops up curiously often as one reads of the various customs connected with the December holidays the world over. In southern France the Provençal women strew wheat on the surface of shallow dishes of water, planting St. Barbara's grain; in Mexico the children try to break with a long stick a bag or jug swung high above their heads, scattering the contents at last all over the floor.

In some parts of Servia there is found among the Christmas customs one which is probably the remnant of an early rite from which all of these "strewing evenings" come. In

that country, after the Christmas fire has been started with due ceremonies, the mother of the family brings in a bundle of straw which has been made ready early in the day. All the young children arrange themselves behind her in a row. She then starts walking slowly about the hall, and all the adjoining rooms, throwing on the floor handfuls of straw, and at the same time imitating the hen's sounds, "Kock . . . kock . . . kock;" while all the children, representing the hen's little chickens, merrily follow shouting, "Peeyoo! . . . peeyoo! . . . peeyoo!" The floor well strewn with straw, and the little folk in breathless heaps upon it, the oldest man of the family throws a few walnuts in every corner of the hall. After this a large pot, or a small wooden box, is filled with wheat and placed a little higher than a man's head in the east corner of the hall. In the middle of the wheat is fixed a tall candle of yellow wax. The father of the family then reverently lights the candle, and, folding his arms on his breast, he prays, while all who are present stand silently behind him, asking God to bless the family with health and happiness, to bless the fields with good harvests, the beehives with plenty of honey, the sheep with many lambs, the cows with rich creamy milk, and so on. When he finishes his prayer, he bows deeply before the burning candle, and all those standing behind him do the same. He then turns toward them and says, "May God hear our prayer, and may He grant us all health!" to which they answer, "God grant it. Amen!"

In Holland the very little children believe that while they are busy gathering up the saint's goodies, or else in the

night, he hides away the presents meant for them all over the house. Before they go to bed they place their largest shoes — wooden sabots, such as you see in almost every picture of Dutch children — in the chimney place, where in the morning they find them stuffed with fruit, nuts, and sweets. There are no lie-a-beds in Holland on St. Nicholas' morning. There is a glorious game of "seek-and-find" going on in every house where there are children. Piet takes down one of the shining copper saucepans hanging beside the chimney place and finds curled up inside it the many-petticoated doll which of course he hands over to a delighted little sister, who has somewhere discovered his box of gaily painted leaden soldiers. There are plenty of hiding holes in an old Dutch house; thick oak beams support the walls and roofs and make wide ledges upon which Rupert may find a packet containing two flat silver buttons which once belonged to his great-grandfather. He is the oldest son, beginning to be particular about his striped waistcoats and the tight fit of his blue or red coat. He will be immensely proud to wear, as every other man in the old village does, two silver buttons at the waist of his baggy trousers. In the parts of Holland where the new fashions have not spoiled the old, silver buttons are to the men what such coral necklaces as Rupert's sister wears are to the women. These buttons are always as big as the men can afford, and sometimes are like saucers; the little boys, even the tiniest ones, are dressed exactly after the pattern of their fathers, but their two flat buttons are smaller, about as large as fifty-cent pieces, and stamped with some design, the favorite one being a ship.

When all the gifts have been hunted out (down to a pair of skates with long curved tips for a boy so little that you would think St. Nicholas must have made a mistake if you did not know that Dutch children learn to skate almost as early as you learn to walk), the children are ready for the season's other special treat, the gingerbread cakes. Delicately spiced gingerbread is made into many fantastic shapes, but every one, young or old, receives a gingerbread doll. Figures of men are given to the women folk, and of women in ruffles and straight skirts to the men. It is interesting to see how exactly like these gingerbread figures are in outline to those in early Dutch paintings. The models from which they are patterned frequently date from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

How St. Nicholas Came to Volendam

ONE winter I was staying with my husband at the little fishing village of Volendam, and we wished that the little Volendamers, who are all very poor, should for once have a splendid St. Nicholas. A French artist, who was there at the same time, was of our opinion, and we were equally supported by our host Spaander and his wife and their family of blooming daughters. In the wooden hotel there is a "coffee-room," long and low, of really vast proportions. In the summer-time half of it forms the drawing-room. At the farther end of this apartment is a small stage, with wings. On this occasion (thanks to Spaander) the whole of it was covered in spotless white, tables were

erected, and upon their surface were arranged about a thousand toys and as many oranges and cakes. A white throne was placed for St. Nicholas, whose part was taken by the Frenchman. He wore a long white woollen robe falling over a purple silk underdress, a cape of costly old yellow brocade, and a gorgeous jewelled mitre, and he was made venerable by long white hair and beard. The dress of the black slave, whose part was taken by my husband, was equally correct and effective—a long tight-fitting garment of green velvet, showing a white robe underneath; an orange silk turban was wound round the black locks of a disguising wig and lit up his cork-black face. So much for the preparations, completed with considerable trouble and a great deal of amusement.

My husband painted a large poster, on which was set forth a notice to all the children of Volendam that at 6.30 a boat would land upon the quay, bearing St. Nicholas and his faithful slave laden with gifts. One may easily imagine the joy and delight of these poor fisher-children, into whose uneventful lives what English children call a treat hardly ever enters. They crowded about the announcement, and read that St. Nicholas would come laden with gifts. Who can say what wild, beautiful hopes filled their hearts? Before five o'clock the youngsters began to assemble. The quay was crowded with them, so was the narrow road leading from the quay to the hotel. The parents also were there, quite as excited and almost as credulous as their children. Indeed, all Volen-

dam turned out to welcome the saint. Rain began to fall; but, although it soaked their poor clothes, it seemed to have no damping effect upon their spirits, all afire as they were with expectation. Meanwhile, the saint and his slave rowed out to their boat. It was now almost dark, but in the faint light one could still distinguish the fishing-boats which always crowd the harbor, their tall masts and sails dimly defined against the gray sky, and their narrow flags gently flapping in the rain. At one point there was an opening between the boats, a glimmering waterway, where those who were in the secret expected the boat to appear. The time passed slowly. It was seven o'clock; and every one was very wet. Still, all Volendam was full of cheerful good humor.

At length a blaze of bright light far out on the water revealed the saint—a venerable figure standing in the boat, crosier in hand, evidently blessing the expectant crowd. In a few moments the boat reached the landing-place. With blare of trumpets, and by the light of the torches, a procession was formed. How radiant were the faces illumined by the flickering glow! Soon the warm, well-lighted café was reached. The saint sat on his throne, and his good slave rapidly distributed presents to the little ones, safely housed from the inclement weather! Alas! they were very wet; but, as not one of the seven hundred coughed during the distribution, it may be concluded that the young Volendamers do not easily take cold. Their surroundings are so damp that they are almost amphibious.

Every face beamed with happiness. The genial St. Nicholas and his hard-worked slave; the Spaander family all helping vigorously; the three fine, tall Volendamers, who, in their yellow scarves of office, kept order so gently and gaily; down to the very youngest child,—all the faces were sweet and patient, and aglow with the pleasure either of giving or receiving.

The crowd of children looked plump and healthy, and although many garments were much patched, there were no rags; the poorest seemed to be well cared for and comfortable.

Seven hundred of them were made happy with toys and fruit; but there was no scrambling or pushing, nothing but happy expectation, and then still more happy satisfaction. All too soon it was over; the last child clattered down the long room with its precious armful.

Afterwards we heard from the schoolteachers and the children's parents that most of them believed firmly that it was the real saint descended from heaven who had laid his hands on their heads in benediction as they received their presents from the black slave.

— BEATRIX JUNGMAN.



Keeping Christmas in the Old Way

THERE is an amusing account of how Christmas used to be observed in England in the time of George II, in a little book called "Round about our Coal Fire, or Christmas Entertainments," published in 1740. The author begins:—

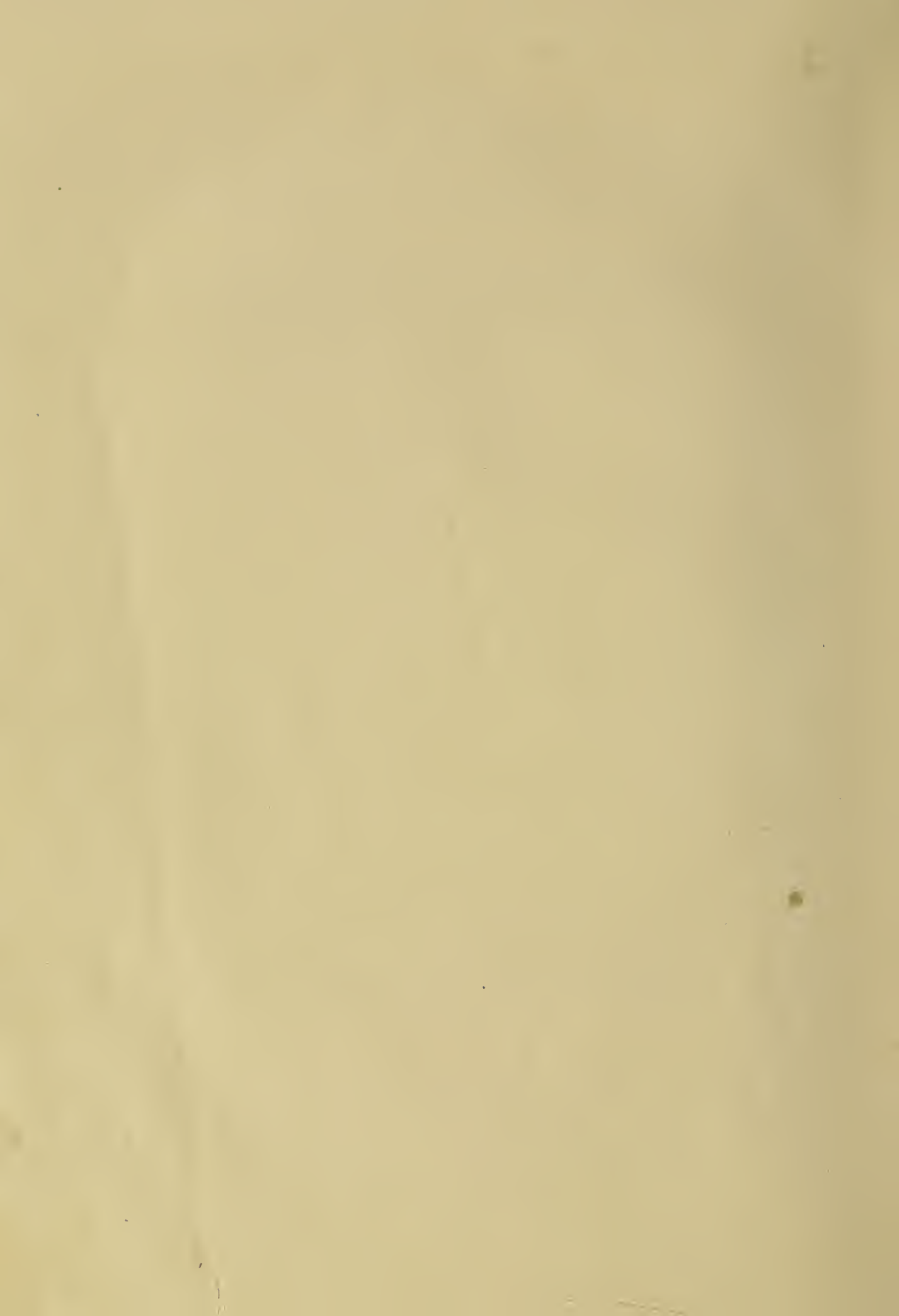
"First acknowledging the sacredness of the Holy Time of *Christmas*, I proceed to set forth the Rejoicings which are generally made at the great Festival.

"You must understand, good People, that the manner of celebrating this great Course of Holydays is vastly different now to what it was in former days: There was once upon a time Hospitality in the land; an *English* Gentleman at the opening of the great Day, had all his Tenants and Neighbours enter'd his Hall by Day-break, the strong Beer was broach'd, and the Black Jacks went plentifully about with Toast, Sugar, Nutmeg, and good Cheshire Cheese; the Rooms were embower'd with Holly, Ivy, Cypress, Bays, Laurel, and Misselto, and a bouncing *Christmas* Log in the Chimney glowing like the cheeks of a country Milk-maid; then was the pewter as bright as *Clarinda*, and every bit of Brass as polished as the most refined Gentleman; the Servants were then running here and there, with merry Hearts and jolly Countenances; every one was busy welcoming of Guests, and look'd as smug as new licked Puppies; the Lasses as blithe and buxom as the maids in good Queen *Bess's* Days, when they eat Sir-Loins of Roast Beef for Breakfast; *Peg* would scuttle about to make Toast for *John*, while *Tom* run



ADORATION OF THE MAGI

Bernadino Luini



harum scarum to draw a Jug of Ale for *Margery*: Gaffer *Spriggins* was bid thrice welcome by the 'Squire, and Gooddy *Goose* did not fail of a smacking Buss from his Worship while his Son and Heir did the Honours of the House: in a word, the Spirit of Generosity ran thro' the whole House.

"In these Times all the Spits were sparkling, the *Hackin* (a great sausage) must be boiled by Day-break, or else two young Men took the Maiden (the cook) by the Arms, and run her round the Market-place, till she was ashamed of her Laziness. And what was worse than this, she must not play with the Young Fellows that Day, but stand Neuter, like a Girl doing penance in a Winding-sheet at a Church-door.

"But now let us enquire a little farther, to arrive at the Sense of the Thing; this great Festival was in former Times kept with so much Freedom and Openess of Heart, that every one in the Country where a Gentleman resided, possessed at least a Day of Pleasure in the *Christmas* Holydays; the Tables were all spread from the first to the last, the Sir-loins of Beef, the Minc'd Pies, the Plum-Porridge, the Capons, Turkeys, Geese, and Plum-puddings, were all brought upon the board; and all those who had sharp stomachs and sharp Knives eat heartily and were welcome, which gave rise to the Proverb —

Merry in the Hall, when Beards wag all.

* * * * *

"A merry Gentleman of my Acquaintance desires I will insert, that the old Folks in the Days of yore kept open House at *Christmas* out of Interest; for then, says he, they

receive the greatest part of their rent in Kind; such as Wheat, Barley or Malt, Oxen, Calves, Sheep, Swine, Turkeys, Capon, Geese, and such like; and they not having Room enough to preserve their Cattle or Poultry, nor Markets to sell off the Overplus, they were obliged to use them in their own Houses; and by treating the People of the country, gained credit amongst them, and riveted the Minds and Goodwill of their Neighbours so firmly in them that no one durst venture to oppose them. The 'Squire's Will was done whatever came on it; for if he happened to ask a Neighbour what it was a Clock, they returned with a low Scrape, it was what your Worship pleases.

"The Dancing and Singing of the Benchers in the great Inns of the Court in *Christmas*, is in some sort founded upon Interest; for they hold, as I am informed, some Privilege by Dancing about the Fire in the middle of their Hall, and singing the Song of *Round about our Coal Fire*, &c.

"This time of the year being cold and frosty, generally speaking, or when Jack-Frost commonly takes us by the Nose, the Diversions are within Doors, either in Exercise or by the Fire-side.

"Country-Dancing is one of the chief Exercises. . . .

"Then comes Mumming or Masquerading, when the 'Squire's Wardrobe is ransacked for Dresses of all Kinds, and the coal-hole searched around, or corks burnt to black the Faces of the Fair, or make Deputy-Mustaches, and every one in the Family except the 'Squire himself must be transformed from what they were. . . .

“Or else there is a match at *Blind-Man's-Buff*, and then it is lawful to set anything in the way for Folks to tumble over. . . .

“As for *Puss in the Corner*, that is a very harmless Sport, and one may romp at it as much as one will. . . .

“The next game to this is *Questions and Commands*, when the Commander may oblige his Subject to answer any lawful Question, and make the same obey him instantly, under the penalty of being smutted, or paying such Forfeit as may be laid on the Aggressor; but the Forfeits being generally fixed at some certain Price, as a Shilling, Half a Crown, &c., so every one knowing what to do if they should be too stubborn to submit, making themselves easy at discretion.

“As for the game of *Hoop and Hide*, the Parties have the Liberty of hiding where they will, in any part of the House; and if they happen to be caught the Dispute ends in Kissing, &c.

“Most of the Diversions are Cards and Dice, but they are seldom set on foot, unless a Lawyer is at hand, to breed some dispute for him to decide, or at least to have some Party in.

“And now I come to another Entertainment frequently used, which is of the Story-telling Order, *viz.* of Hobgoblins, Witches, Conjurors, Ghosts, Fairies, and such like common Disturbers.”



As Joseph was a-walking

As Joseph was a-walking,
He heard an angel sing,
"This shall be the birth-night
Of Christ our heavenly king.

"His birth-bed shall be neither
In housen nor in hall,
Nor in the place of paradise,
But in the oxen's stall.

"He neither shall be rockèd
In silver nor in gold,
But in the wooden manger
That lieth in the mould.

"He neither shall be washen
With white wine nor with red,
But with the fair spring water
That on you shall be shed.

"He neither shall be clothèd
In purple nor in pall,
But in the fair white linen
That usen babies all."

As Joseph was a-walking,
Thus did the angels sing,
And Mary's son at midnight
Was born to be our King.



The "Jule-Nissen" and Blowing in the Yule

I DO not know how the forty years I have been away have dealt with "Jule-nissen," the Christmas elf of my childhood. He was pretty old then, gray and bent, and there were signs that his time was nearly over. So it may be that they have laid him away. I shall find out when I go over there next time. When I was a boy we never sat down to our Christmas Eve dinner until a bowl of rice and milk had been taken up to the attic, where he lived with the marten and its young and kept an eye upon the house—saw that everything ran smoothly. I never met him myself, but I know the house-cat must have done so. No doubt they were well acquainted; for when in the morning I went in for the bowl, there it was, quite dry and licked clean, and the cat purring in the corner. So, being there all night, he must have seen and likely talked with him. . . . The Nisse was of the family, as you see, very much of it, and certainly not to be classed with the cattle. Yet they were his special concern; he kept them quiet and saw to it, when the stableman forgot, that they were properly bedded and cleaned and fed. He was very well known to the hands about the farm, and they said that he looked just like a little old man, all in gray and with a pointed red nightcap and long gray beard. He was always civilly treated, as he surely deserved to be, but Christmas was his great holiday, when he became part of it, indeed, and was made much of. So, for that matter, was everything that lived under the husbandman's roof, or within reach of it.

BLOWING in the Yule from the grim old tower that had stood eight hundred years against the blasts of the North Sea was one of the customs of the Old Town that abide, that I know. At sun-up, while yet the people were at breakfast, the town band climbed the many steep ladders to the top of the tower, and up there, in fair weather or foul, — and sometimes it blew great guns from the wintry sea, — they played four old hymns, one to each corner of the compass, so that no one was forgotten. They always began with Luther's sturdy challenge, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," while down below we listened devoutly. There was something both weird and beautiful about those far-away strains in the early morning light of the northern winter, something that was not of earth and that suggested to my child's imagination the angel's song on far Judean hills. Even now, after all these years, the memory of it does that.



Christmas Eve in Merry England

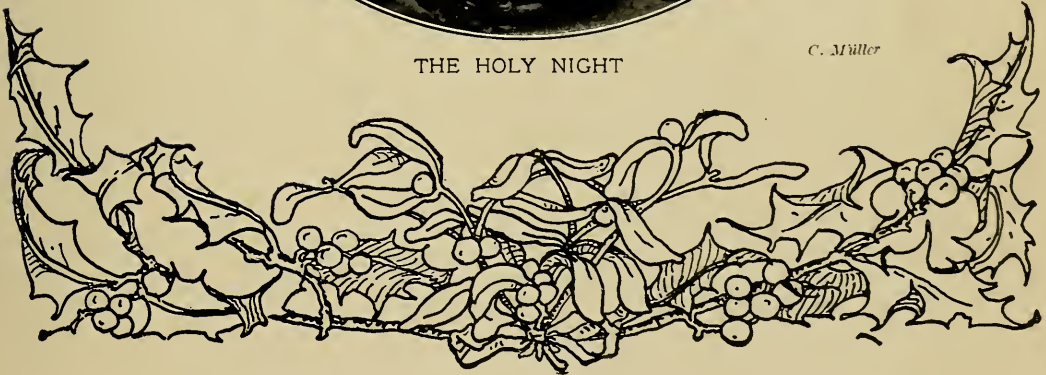
ON Christmas Eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas Eve the mass was sung;
That only night in all the year,
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dressed with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merry-men go,
To gather in the mistletoe.
Then open'd wide the baron's hall
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all;
Power laid his rod of rule aside
And Ceremony doff'd his pride.
The heir, with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose;
The Lord, underogating, share
The vulgar game of "post and pair."
All hail'd, with uncontroll'd delight,
And general voice, the happy night,
That to the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation down.
The fire, with well-dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide;
The huge hall table's oaken face,
Scrub'd till it shone, the day to grace,
Bore then upon its massive board
No mark to part the squire and lord;

Then was brought in the lusty brawn,
By old blue-coated serving man;
Then the grim boar's head frown'd on high,
Crested with bays and rosemary.
Well can the green-garb'd ranger tell,
How, when, and where, the monster fell;
What dogs before his death he tore,
And all the baiting of the boar.
The wassel round, in good brown bowls,
Garnish'd with ribbons, blithely trowls;
There the huge sirloin reek'd; hard by
Plum-porridge stood, and Christmas pie;
Nor fail'd old Scotland to produce,
At such high tide her savory goose.
Then came the merry maskers in,
And carols roar'd with blithesome din;
If unmelodious was the song,
It was a hearty note, and strong.
Who lists may in their mumming see
Traces of ancient mystery;
White shirts supplied the masquerade,
And smutted cheeks the visors made;
But, O! what maskers, richly dight,
Can boast of bosoms half so light!
England was merry England, when
Old Christmas brought his sports again.



THE HOLY NIGHT

C. Müller





When Christmas was not Merry

CHRISTMAS was not always "Merry Christmas" in old England, for at one time a strong effort was made to do away with the holiday entirely, after some of the older ways of celebrating the season had become too boisterous for decent -God-fearing folk. "At this season," says old Dr. Stubbs, "all the wild-heads of the parish flocking together choose them a grand captain of Mischief, whom they crown with great solemnity and the title of Lord of Misrule, who chooseth as many as he will to guard his noble person. Then every one of these men he dresseth in liveries of green, of yellow, or other light color; and as though they were not gaudy enough, they bedeck themselves with scarves, ribbons, laces, and jewels. This done they tie about either leg twenty or forty bells, with rich handkerchiefs on their heads, and sometimes laid across their shoulders and necks. . . . Then march this heathenish company to the church, their pipes piping, their drums thundering, their bells jingling, their handkerchiefs fluttering about their heads like madmen, their hobby horses, dragoons, and other monsters skirmishing among the throng. And in this sort they go to church though minister be at prayer or preaching, — dancing and singing with such a confused noise that no man can hear his own voice." "My Lord of Misrule's badges" were given to those who contributed money to pay the expense of this wild fooling; those who refused were sometimes ducked in the cow pond, he adds. It is admitted that these abuses were

quite as bad as he described, and that they were among the chief reasons why, in the seventeenth century, Cromwell tried to put down the great old holiday. His Puritan government ordered that the shops were to be opened, that markets were to be held, that all the work of the world should go on as if there had never been carols sung or chimes set ringing "on Christmas Day in the morning." Instead of merry chimes, people heard a crier's harsh-sounding bell and his monotonous voice telling every one "No Christmas! No Christmas!"

In Scotland about the same time bakers were ordered to stop baking Yule cakes, women were ordered to spin in open sight on Yule day, farm laborers were told to yoke their ploughs. In both countries the masks, or Christmas plays, which had been so popular in the houses of rich nobles, were absolutely forbidden; and if one were given, those who merely looked on might be fined and the actors whipped.

But the people would not have their holiday taken away. Shops might open, but few would come to buy. In Canterbury on one Christmas Day the townspeople asked the tradesmen to close their shops. The tradesmen feared the law's penalties, so refused. In the riot that followed the mob broke the shop windows, scattered the goods, and roughly handled the shopkeepers.

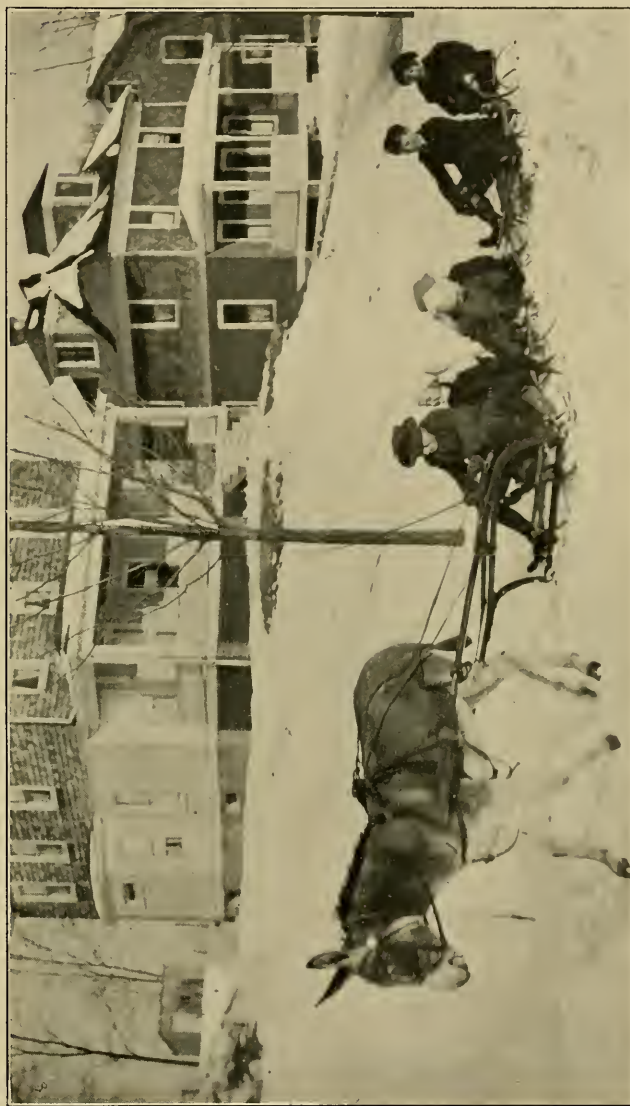
In London even Christmas decorations were forbidden, but when the Lord Mayor sent a man to take down some holiday greens from one of the houses, the saucy London 'prentice-boys swarmed out with sticks and stones and sent him flying. Then came on horseback, fat and lordly, even the great Lord Mayor

himself, who thought his dignity would overawe the unruly boys. But they only laughed and shouted until his horse took fright and ran away — and perhaps he was glad to be let off so easily. Even where the people dared not openly fight the new laws, they did not obey them more than they could help. Spinning-wheels were idle because there was no flax, and ploughs were “gone to be mended” on Christmas Day in many an English village until after the death of Cromwell, when the holiday came to its own again in “merrie England.”

The same dislike for the festival of Christmas, with its drinking, dancing, and stage plays, came over to the New World with the Puritans. Only a year after the landing at Plymouth Governor Bradford called his men out to work, “on ye day called Christmas Day,” as on other days. But certain young men, who had just come over in the little ship *Fortune*, held back and said it went against their consciences to work on that day. So the governor told them that he would spare them till they were better informed. But when he and the rest came home at noon from their work, he found them in the street at play openly, some pitching the bar and some at ball and such like sports. So he went to them and took away their implements and told them it was against *his* conscience that they should play and others work. If they made the keeping of it matter of devotion, he said, let them keep their houses, but there should be no gaming or revelling in the street. Later, in 1659, a law was made that anybody found to be keeping “by feasting, or not working, or in any other way, any such day as Christmas Day, shall pay for every offense five shillings.”

Going Home for Christmas.

IN the course of a December tour in Yorkshire, I rode for a long distance in one of the public coaches, on the day preceding Christmas. The coach was crowded, both inside and out, with passengers, who, by their talk, seemed principally bound to the mansions of relations or friends to eat the Christmas dinner. It was loaded also with hampers of game, and baskets and boxes of delicacies; and hares hung dangling their long ears about the coachman's box—presents from distant friends for the impending feast. I had three fine rosy-cheeked schoolboys for my fellow-passengers inside, full of the buxom health and manly spirit which I have observed in the children of this country. They were returning home for the holidays in high glee, and promising themselves a world of enjoyment. It was delightful to hear the gigantic plans of pleasure of the little rogues, and the impracticable feats they were to perform during their six weeks' emancipation from the abhorred thralldom of book, birch, and pedagogue. They were full of anticipations of the meeting with the family and household, down to the very cat and dog; and of the joy they were to give their little sisters by the presents with which their pockets were crammed; but the meeting to which they seemed to look forward with the greatest impatience was with Bantam, which I found to be a pony, and, according to their talk, possessed of more virtues than any steed since the days of Bucephalus. How he could trot! how he could run! and then such leaps as he would take—there was not a hedge in the whole country that he could not clear.



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A CHRISTMAS GIFT ON THE WAY TO A CHRISTMAS DINNER

They were under the particular guardianship of the coachman, to whom, whenever an opportunity presented, they addressed a host of questions, and pronounced him one of the best fellows in the whole world. Indeed, I could not but notice the more than ordinary air of bustle and importance of the coachman, who wore his hat a little on one side, and had a large bunch of Christmas greens stuck in the buttonhole of his coat. He is always a personage full of mighty care and business, but he is particularly so during this season, having so many commissions to execute in consequence of the great interchange of presents. . . .

Perhaps the impending holiday might have given a more than usual animation to the country, for it seemed to me as if everybody was in good looks and good spirits. Game, poultry, and other luxuries of the table were in brisk circulation in the villages; the grocers', butchers', and fruiterers' shops were thronged with customers. The housewives were stirring briskly about, putting their dwellings in order; and the glossy branches of holly, with their bright red berries, began to appear at the windows. The scene brought to mind an old writer's account of Christmas preparations: "Now capons and hens, besides turkeys, geese, and ducks, with beef and mutton—must all die; for in twelve days a multitude of people will not be fed with a little. Now plums and spice, sugar and honey, square it among pies and broth. Now or never must music be in tune, for the youth must dance and sing to get them a heat, while the aged sit by the fire. The country maid leaves half her market, and must be sent again,

if she forgets a pack of cards on Christmas Eve. Great is the contention of Holly and Ivy, whether master or dame wears the breeches. Dice and cards benefit the butler; and if the cook do not lack wit, he will sweetly lick his fingers."

I was roused from this fit of luxurious meditation by a shout from my little travelling companions. They had been looking out of the coach windows for the last few miles, recognizing every tree and cottage as they approached home, and now there was a general burst of joy — "There's John! and there's old Carlo! and there's Bantam!" cried the happy little rogues, clapping their hands.

At the end of a lane there was an old sober-looking servant in livery waiting for them; he was accompanied by a superannuated pointer, and by the redoubtable Bantam, a little old rat of a pony, with a shaggy mane and long rusty tail, who stood dozing quietly by the roadside, little dreaming of the bustling times that awaited him.

I was pleased to see the fondness with which the little fellows leaped about the steady old footman, and hugged the pointer, who wriggled his whole body for joy. But Bantam was the great object of interest; all wanted to mount at once; and it was with some difficulty that John arranged that they should ride by turns, and the eldest should ride first.

Off they set at last; one on the pony, with the dog bounding and barking before him, and the others holding John's hands; both talking at once, and overpowering him by questions about home, and with school anecdotes. I looked after them with a feeling in which I do not know whether pleasure

or melancholy predominated; for I was reminded of those days when, like them, I had neither known care nor sorrow, and a holiday was the summit of earthly felicity. We stopped a few moments afterwards to water the horses, and on resuming our route, a turn of the road brought us in sight of a neat country-seat. I could just distinguish the forms of a lady and two young girls in the portico, and I saw my little comrades, with Bantam, Carlo, and old John, trooping along the carriage road. I leaned out of the coach window, in hopes of witnessing the happy meeting, but a grove of trees shut it from my sight.

God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

God rest you merry, gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born upon this day;
To save us all from Satan's power,
When we were gone astray.
*O tidings of comfort and joy,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas Day.*

In Bethlehem in Jewry
This blessed babe was born,
And laid within a manger
Upon this blessed morn;
The which His mother Mary
Nothing did take in scorn.

THE CHILDREN'S BOOK OF CHRISTMAS

From God, our Heavenly Father,
A blessed Angel came,
And, unto certain shepherds,
Brought tidings of the same;
How, that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by name.

The Shepherds 'at those tidings,
Rejoiced much in mind,
And left their flocks a-feeding
In tempest, storm, and wind,
And went to Bethlehem straightway,
This blessed Babe to find.

But when to Bethlehem they came,
Where as this Infant lay,
They found him in a manger
Where oxen feed on hay,
His mother Mary kneeling
Unto the Lord did pray.

Now to the Lord sing praises
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace,
This holy tide of Christmas
All others doth deface.

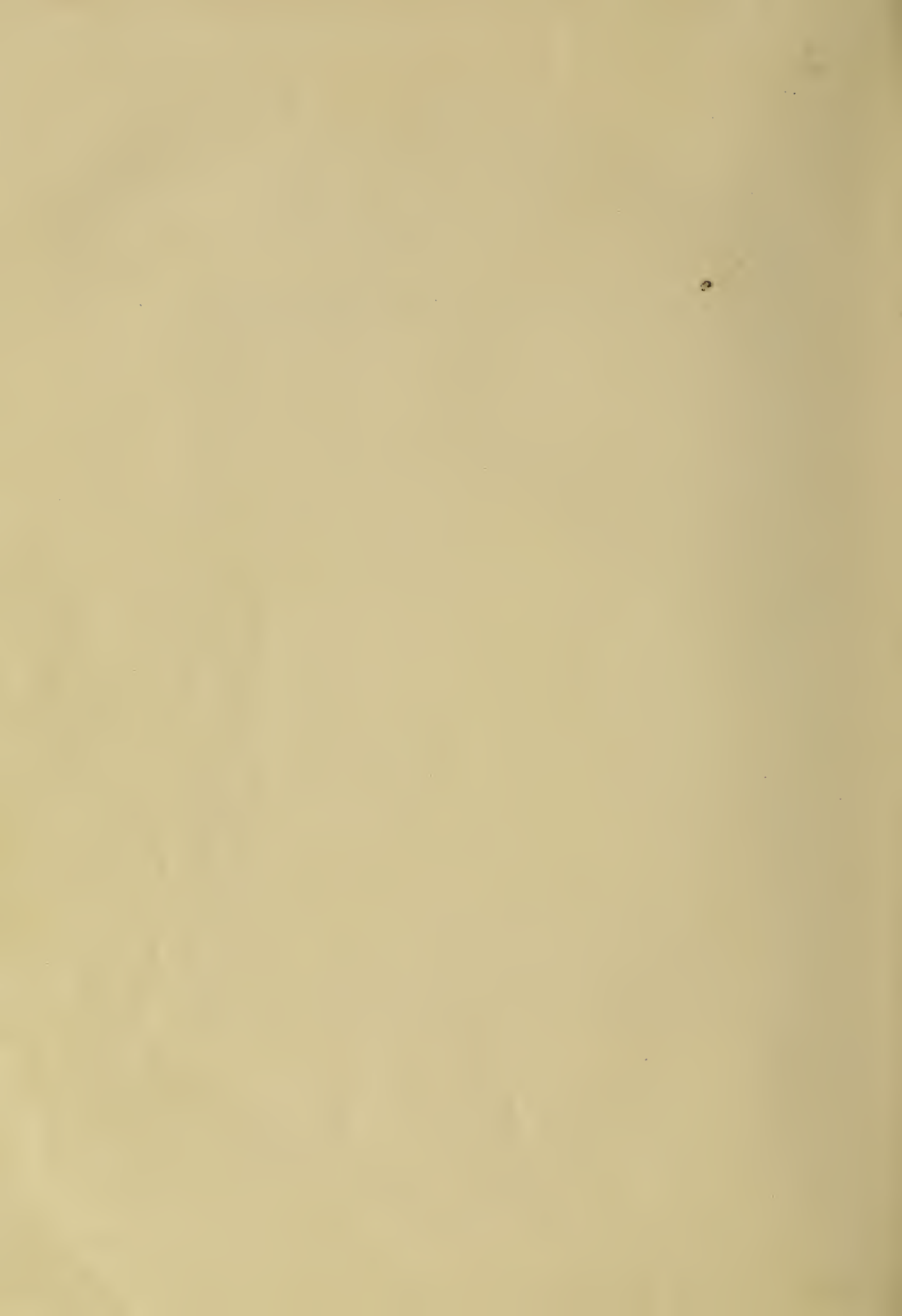
*O tidings of comfort and joy,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas Day.*



THE HOLY NIGHT

Correggio

BS



The Date of Russia's Christmastide

REAL winter in Russia is supposed to start on the feast of St. Nicholas of which the date, written in Russian style, is December 6/19. The first figure gives the date of the month as it is known in Russia and Greece, the second the date according to the calendar in use in all other civilized countries.

The calendar which was brought into use by Julius Cæsar, and was carried all over the then known world by the Romans, aimed to measure the year by the time it takes the earth to move once around the sun. His Egyptian astronomer figured that this required $365\frac{1}{4}$ days, so the practice was begun of having three years of 365 days, followed by a leap year, to which an extra day is given. As a matter of fact, the length of the average year is *not exactly* $365\frac{1}{4}$ days. To be sure, that is only $11\frac{1}{4}$ seconds or so out of the way, and this may seem a very small matter out of a whole year; but what happens is that every 128 years or so the calendar of Julius Cæsar or the Julian Calendar, as it is called, gets a day behind. By the year 1582, when Gregory XIII was Pope, the calendar was ten days slow. So Pope Gregory issued an order that the year was to take a new start and that thereafter three leap years out of every four centuries should be omitted, which keeps the calendar very nearly correct. But though Pope Gregory might decree, it did not follow that every one would obey at once; the ignorant thought

that by the change of date they were losing ten days of time and, of course, of wages. After some confusion all the Roman Catholic countries obeyed. England, being a Protestant country, ignored Pope Gregory's commands. But it could not so easily dismiss the knowledge of its own astronomers that the Gregorian Calendar, as it is called, is nearer the truth than the Julian. In 1752, therefore, the date of the day of the year was changed by an Act of Parliament. The day after September 3 was to be called September 14, which it would have been if the calendar had not been slow. And naturally the change was also made in America, to which the new style had been brought already by French and Spanish settlers from Catholic countries.

There were always hot jealousies between the Eastern Church, ruled from Constantinople, and the Western, ruled from Rome. The Eastern or Greek churches refused to change their calendar on the order of a Latin Pope, and to this day retain the old style, the Julian dates. This is why their Christmas follows our Twelfth Day, for by this time their calendar is thirteen days behind the Gregorian. But to avoid confusion the double date is very generally in use.

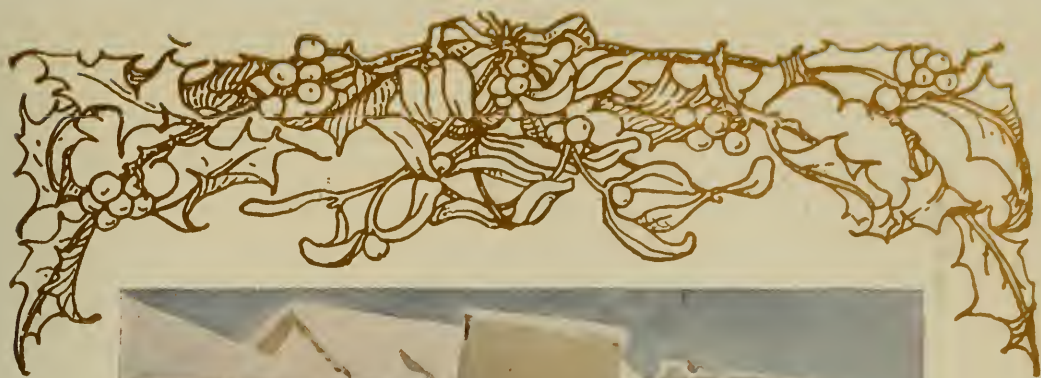
During the time between the Day of St. Nicholas and Christmas it seems as if half Russia streams out upon the ice of the river Neva in St. Petersburg. All through the summer the boats come and go, bringing food, fuel, building materials, everything the city needs, from the

interior; but the river is frozen for six months of the year, and in those months it is used as if it were public land. St. Petersburg is a very gay capital in winter, when the wealthier Russian nobles have left their country estates, and come down to exchange visits, to give balls, or go dashing about in gay sleighs to join the sleighing or skating contests for which a part of the frozen river is reserved. All around the cleared spaces on the ice, merchants have set up temporary booths; here you may buy tea and nut-cakes; there holy pictures, or ikons, pictures of all the possible saints, some costing a few pennies, others with gold and silver backgrounds costing many roubles, a rouble being worth about fifty cents. On another part of the river a great provision market is held a little before Christmas, and the booths stretch for miles. Everything is frozen. Countless oxen, piles of sheep and goats, pyramids of pigs, form a frozen range of hillocks to which the butcher comes to make his choice. With hatchet or saw he divides the animal, ox, or pig, or it may be a bear, into sections which his customers store in the ice-cellars which have all been freshly filled. Thousands of workmen are engaged during the winter in cutting and drawing the ice from yet another part of the Neva, and on a still frosty morning the clink of their axes against iron ice-breakers can be heard at a long distance from the river.

A great ceremony of the Greek Church takes place each year at the end of their Christmas season—the Benediction of the Waters—in every town and village in Russia and

down along the coasts of Greece. In St. Petersburg the ceremony is performed by the Czar outside the Winter Palace. A wooden temple is put up out on the ice, decorated with gilt and paintings within, and surrounded by a hedge of fir boughs without. A hole is made in the ice, and to this a long procession makes its way; troops with bright banners, gorgeously robed bishops, and priests carrying lighted tapers and big ikons, are followed by more soldiers, the Czar and Czarina in magnificently jewelled robes, and after them their Court brilliant in uniforms and beautiful fur-trimmed dresses. They have all attended one service in the Imperial Chapel; they now have another on the ice. The water is blessed, evil spirits flee away, the soldiers fire a salute, and every one is sprinkled with the now holy water. The procession returns to the city, carrying with it great vessels of the holy water to be used later in all the churches. Then the people who have been looking on try to get to the hole; some draw up pailfuls of the cold liquid; others plunge bodily into the icy water, believing that so they will be cleansed from sin or sickness; many have even plunged delicate babies into it, content, if the child does not survive the shock, in the belief that its soul is forever saved. And over every door in the great city on that day rests the sign of the cross, lest the evil spirit expelled from the water should enter any home.





St. Barbara's Grain

ONLY in the south of France, they say, is to be found the custom of planting St. Barbara's grain on the fourth of December. Earthenware dishes an inch or two in depth are half filled with water, on the surface of which wheat is scattered, or the small, flattened seeds of the lentil, a leafy-stemmed plant whose honey-laden blossoms will, later in the year, draw swarms of golden bees to the fields where it is planted. The dish is then set in the warm ashes of the fireplace, or on the deep stone sill of a sunny window, and the grain is left to sprout and grow so that on the table of the Christmas Eve supper there may be this tender promise of the harvest of the year to come—a pale, delicate young greenness in strong contrast with the darker evergreens. The bent old *gran'mère* by the hearth will tell you, that as the growth is thick and sturdy or scattered and thin, so will be the later harvests of grain, or honey.

The yellow daffodil, or narcissus, is a plant which first grew in southern France, and along the Mediterranean, and it may be that it was some early settler from Languedoc or Provence, who introduced into Louisiana a custom common half a century ago, that had a dim resemblance to this planting of St. Barbara's grain. The daffodil bulbs were planted in shallow earthenware dishes on the eve of All Saints, and set for three weeks in the warm dark, and later in the sun. The older creoles foretold a fruitful year if the flower bud were well formed by St. Barbara's day.

Before the Paling of the Stars

BEFORE the paling of the stars,
Before the winter morn,
Before the earliest cockcrow,
Jesus Christ was born:
Born in a stable,
Cradled in a manger,
In the world His hands had made
Born a stranger.

Priest and King lay fast asleep
In Jerusalem,
Young and old lay fast asleep
In crowded Bethlehem:
Saint and Angel, ox and ass,
Kept a watch together
Before the Christmas daybreak
In the winter weather.

Jesus on His Mother's breast
In the stable cold,
Spotless Lamb of God was He,
Shepherd of the fold:
Let us kneel with Mary Maid,
With Joseph bent and hoary,
With Saint and Angel, ox and ass,
To hail the King of Glory.

A Midnight Mass in France

THE great time for making gifts in France is the *Jour de l'An*, the day of the year, our New Year's Day, when there is a great exchange of cards, good wishes, visits, and presents. On Christmas Eve, everything else used to pale before the exciting adventure of going to the church at midnight. After church came the Grand Supper, a family gathering from which the children were sent to bed long before they were ready to go, comforting themselves as they climbed the stair by asking each other, "What do you think P'tit Noël will put in your shoe?" But they were always too sleepy to lie awake long enough to see whose hand it was that dropped into each little shoe under the mantelpiece a few goodies or bits of silver coin. Sometimes one was guiltily afraid that a black record of naughtiness deserved the disgracing gift of a few pebbles, but then, — surely Petit Jesus was forgiving and next year one would be very good, yes, of a certainty, *most* good.

Earlier in the evening the children had been allowed to play any game they liked, however noisy, quite up to eleven o'clock, which was unusual enough by itself. Then began a great bundling up in furs and mufflers before the plunge from the warm candle-lighted room into the frosty night, where stars shone like gold nails driven into blue-black velvet; the frost crunched under wooden shoes; the lanterns threw strange, wavering shadows; a dry branch fell with a sudden crackle; far away a horse whickered and stamped just as

one was coming toward the deepest blackness of all, where the great gray church and the tall buildings about it threw the Grande Place into densest shadow. Nothing in that sound should frighten one, but every child had heard the peasants tell of this enchanted hour when animals in their stables could talk like men; still, nothing could harm a child on the way to mass, of course, so one plucked up courage and sang out extra loudly in the refrain of whatever carol was being rung on the chimes in the ivy-covered tower.

The old church had always seemed large, very large for the few who worshipped in it, but now it was majestic, reaching up toward the skies as if to gather from the angelic choir the great waves of music that rolled down the valley to be heard miles away. And how could one help gasping when a gust of wind swept him suddenly into the porch; there through the open door he was caught and drawn forward, adoring, by the full splendor of the altar, studded with lights, dazzling against dark walls, green with pine and laurel.

At one side was the crèche, the miniature stable scene, where the mother ever watched in wondering love the Holy Child. Down the long nave, from the damp stone floor which had never known the luxury of matting, great pillars lost themselves in the blackness of the arches. But each who entered brought his lantern and set it on the stones in front of him; one after another the little lights like stars came twinkling out all over the church. And each newcomer joined in the carols sung before the mass was



THE BELLS

Bushfield

begun — old, old carols with beloved refrains which one heard only at Christmas time.

The old mysteries, quaint plays in which long ago the peasants of Southern France acted the simple stories of the adoration of the Babe by the angels, the shepherds, and the Wise Men, are seen no more, but it is said that until very recently, in some of the provinces, at a certain pause in the mass, a shepherd knocks loudly on the great church door, the hollow sound echoing in the solemn hush. From without is heard singing, the voices of shepherds asking to come in. Slowly the doors swing back, the people part and the shepherds enter, passing up the nave between a double row of worshippers. In front are two or three boys playing softly on simple musical instruments, one has a flute, another a tambourine. Then begins a quaint musical dialogue between these peasants in their long, weather-stained cloaks, and those who stand on either side.

From one hand comes the question, in high treble,

Where hast thou been?

And it is echoed from the other,

What hast thou seen?

And the deep musical voices of the shepherds answer:—

“Deep in a manger, a little child,

On the dry straw, slumbered and smiled.”

So they move slowly, carrying a little fruit, a measure of grain, a pair of pigeons, to where the priest stands waiting to bless their simple gifts and lay them at the foot of the altar.

The Christchild and the Pine Tree

ON the Holy Night when the Christchild was born, the earth lay very near to heaven; all the world was at peace, and there was no noise of war to keep men on earth from hearing the angels sing.

Animals and birds and trees alike were glad because of the coming of the Holy Babe, and like the shepherds and the Wise Men came to bring to Him their gifts. Most of all the little pine tree beside the road longed to take something to the Christchild.

The cedars, instead of pointing their branches upward in pointed slender trees, spread their branches wide, as Cedars of Lebanon do to this day, and bent low to shelter the Mother and Child. But the little pine was too small to shelter anything, and though he stretched and stretched, he was not even tall enough to keep the sun out of the eyes of the Wonderful Babe. He was barely tall enough for the wind to make a whispering sound in the tips of his little branches.

The thorn, although it was midwinter, suddenly blossomed out and brought its white flowers to make a coverlet for the Child's cradle. And the little pine tree tried so hard to blossom that pine-needles came out in tufts all over him, but that was all; only the wind through his branches now sounded like a sigh.

The "bird of God," which we call the wren, flew quickly and brought soft moss and feathers to make His cradle

warm. "I will pull off all my needles to make a bed for Him," the pine tree said. But when he began to do that, Mother Mary smiled and shook her head. "Your needles would only prick Him, little pine," she said. And the little pine rocked in pain and the wind sighed through his branches.

The olive came and brought sweet-smelling oil, with which to rub the Christchild's little limbs; and the pine tree saw her and ached so for something to give that the resin stood out in big drops along his stem. "Oh!" he cried joyfully, "I, too, have oil to give." And Mother Mary's smile was very tender as she shook her head again and said gently, "But your drops are sticky, and they would hurt His tender skin, dear little pine." So the little pine was very unhappy because it had nothing to offer the Christchild. And year by year as he grew taller, and remembered the Holy Night, the wind swept through his branches with a sound that was almost a moan; and ever since you can hear that sound from pine trees all the world over.

Now for hundreds of years after, on each Christmas Eve, the Christchild comes again, in the likeness of a poor child, gathering fallen sticks in the forest. Up and down the hills He goes, shivering in the icy cold, knocking at every door, whether it is of a cabin or a castle, until He finds some one who, remembering His lesson of love, calls Him in to find warmth and shelter; and such a home He blesses. Some there are who, like the pine tree, long to serve Him, and these place a candle in the window, that if He pass along their way, He may see it and come in.

But one night there was no door open and as He walked wearily through the pine wood the wind shrieked through the trees bending before Him. Then the Christchild turned aside and crept under the low branches of a pine tree, which was large enough now to shelter Him; and the moss lifted itself from the snow to make a soft bed for the tired Child. And the pine tree, drawing its branches close above Him, was so happy that tears of joy ran down his branches and freezing, hung in slender icicles. And as the first red rays of the sun on Christmas morning shone upon them they glittered like the candles on your Christmas tree, and the Christchild opened His eyes and smiled.

A Birthday Gift

WHAT can I give Him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb,
If I were a Wise Man
I would do my part,
Yet what I can give Him,—
Give my heart.





Itard

THE TRIUMPH OF THE INNOCENTS

The Christmas Fire in Servia

SERVIA is one of the countries in which the old, old customs have lasted longest. They began in the times when men looked forward longingly to "the days in which the sun, having gone far enough into the snowy plains of the winter, turns back toward the green fields of summer." The celebration begins on the day before Christmas, which the older Servian songs call "the day of the old Badnyak." No one seems to know who Badnyak was; but some have believed that the fast-day was first kept in honor of the old sun-god, who was thought of as grown weak and faint, and as giving place to a younger. For on the next day was the feast of "the little God," the new sun who was to bring summer back again. Nowadays, the name is given to logs cut for the Christmas fire.

Every Servian boy is up before daylight on the day before Christmas, for he, of course, must be on hand when the strongest young men of the family start out with a cart and a pair of oxen to cut a young oak tree and bring it home. Upon the chosen tree they throw a handful of wheat with the greeting, "Happy Badnyi Day to you!" Then they begin to cut it very carefully, timing the strokes of the axes and placing them so that the tree shall fall directly toward the rising sun, and at the exact moment when its red ball begins to show at the edge of the world. If by any mischance, or a stroke of the axe in the wrong place, the tree falls toward the west, there will be great distress, for this is thought to mean that very bad luck will follow the family through all the

coming year. If the tree should fall in the right direction but catch in the branches of another, the good fortune of the family will only be delayed for a while. The small boy's part is to watch very closely where the first chip falls, for it is most important to carry home that first oak chip. The trunk of the tree is trimmed and cut into two or three logs, of which one is a foot or more longer than the others. They are then dragged to the house, but are not taken inside until sunset; in the meantime they stand in the courtyard on either side the door. The house mother leaves her work as they are brought home to break a flat cake of purest wheat flour upon the longest log, while the little girls sing special songs. But soon she goes back to her work, for there is a deal to be done before sunset; the women are making Christmas cakes in the shape of lambs and chickens, and most often of little pigs with blunt-pointed noses and curly tails. For the pig belongs to a Servian Christmas as much as turkey does to an American Thanksgiving. Long ago the pagan Servians used to sacrifice a pig to the sun-god on the day of the old Badnyak; and to this day you will not find one Servian house in which "roast pig" is not the chief dish of the Christmas dinner. While the women bake, the men prepare the pig for the next day's roasting. The boy who so carefully brought home that first oak chip put it at once into a wooden bowl, and his little sister and he cover the chip, and fill the bowl with wheat.

Just at sunset the whole family gathers in the big kitchen. The mother of the family gives a pair of woollen gloves to one of the men — most often to the father, sometimes to the

strongest of her sons, who goes outside to bring in the Badnyak. Tall wax candles are set on either side the open door, and in front of it the mother stands with the wooden bowl in her hands. As the log is brought in she throws a handful of wheat at the bearer, who says, "Good evening, and may you have a happy Badnyi Day." He is answered by a chorus of greetings from all in the room. In some parts of the country each man present brings in a log and at each is thrown a little wheat in sign of the wish that, in the year to come, food may be plenty enough to throw away. A glass of red wine is then sprinkled on the log, and the oldest and the strongest of the family together place it on the burning fire in such a way that the thick end of the log sticks out above the hearth for about a foot. And sometimes you may see a prudent father smear the end of it with honey and place on it a bowl of wheat, an orange, and the ploughshare, that they may be so warmed by the Christmas fire that the cattle shall be fed, the bees industrious, and the trees and fields be fruitful, through all the year.

The Day of the Little God

THERE is so little sleep for the Servian peasant on a Christmas morning that very few except the old and the babies go to bed at all on the night before "the day of the little God," as it is called. For one thing, the new Badnyak, the great log on the Christmas fire, must be kept burning all the time, and brightly. Then the all-important pig must be set to roast early. When it is ready and laid before the fire,

some one goes outside and fires off a gun or pistol; and when the roasted pig is taken from the fire, the shooting is repeated. From four to eight o'clock on a Christmas morning every Servian village reëchoes as if it were celebrating the Fourth of July with cannon crackers.

Just before sunrise some young girl of the family goes to the fountain, or the brook from which they usually get their drinking water. Before she fills her pots or jars she greets the water, wishing it a happy Christmas, and throws into it a handful of wheat. The first cupfuls of water drawn are put into a special jar and are used to make the "Chesnitza," the Christmas cake, which is to be divided into a piece for each member of the family, present or absent. A small silver coin baked into it is supposed to fall to the lot of that member of the family who is to meet with special good fortune during the coming year.

No other visitor is allowed to enter the house before the "Polaznik," the Christmas guest, has come. The part is usually taken by some boy from a neighbor's family, who comes very early and brings with him a woollen glove full of wheat. When at his knock the door is opened, he showers the wheat over those around the brightly burning fire and into all corners of the room with the greeting, "Christ is born." The mother of the family throws a handful of wheat at him and all the others shout, "In truth, He is born!" The guest then walks straight to the fire, and with the heavy shovel strikes the burning log with all his force repeatedly, so that thousands of sparks rise high in the chimney, while he says,



BETHLEHEM

H. Hofmann

"May you have this year so many oxen, so many horses, so many sheep, so many pigs, so many beehives of honey, so much good luck, so much success and happiness." After this good wish he kisses his host, drops to his knees before the Christmas log on the fire, kisses one end of it, which sticks out of the fireplace into the room, and places a coin upon it as his gift. As he rises, a woman offers him a low wooden chair, but just as he seats himself draws it away so that he sits down hard upon the ground, and is thus supposed to fix to it firmly every good wish he has spoken. Finally he is wrapped in a thick blanket, and with it around him sits quietly for a few minutes while the young folks who are to tend the flocks and herds in the coming year come to the hearth and kiss each other solemnly across the Christmas log. The wearing of the blanket is said to insure thick cream in the next year, and the shepherds' kisses will make for peace and plenty among the cattle.

Before the chief meal of the day, all the members of the family gather about its head, each with a lighted candle in hand, while he prays briefly. Then they turn and kiss each other with such greetings as: "Peace of God be with us!" "Christos is born!" "In truth, He is born!" "Therefore let us bow before Christos and His birth." And toward the end of the meal all stand to drink "to the glory of God and of the birth of Christ," which marks the end of the Christmas celebration.

Nature Folk-lore of Christmastide

AMONG all the older peoples of Europe there are many bits of folk stories which tell of the wonderful peace which fell upon the world on the night of the Holy Eve. A Bosnian legend says that at the time of the birth of Christ "the sun in the east bowed down, the stars stood still, the mountains and the forests shook and touched the earth with their summits, and the green pine tree bent, . . . the grass was beflowered with opening blossoms, incense sweet as myrrh pervaded upland and forest, birds sang on the mountain top, and all gave thanks to the great God." This belief in the holy and gracious kinship of all nature at this season finds expression in many countries in an added tenderness for all living things during Yuletide. The very sparrows, whose nests the boys are free to raid at any other time, have a sheaf of rye set up for their Christmas feast, says Mr. Riis, who tells that once, stranded in a Michigan town, he was wandering about the streets and came upon such a sheaf raised upon a pole in a dooryard. "I knew at once," he says, "that one of my people lived in that house and kept Yule in the old way. So I felt as if I were not quite a stranger."

In England, robins are the birds of Christmas time; an old legend has it that on the day of Christ's suffering the robin fluttered beside Him, and in trying to pluck thorns from His crown stained its breast crimson.

So ever when the snow comes round
To crown the wintry year,



Paolo Veronese

THE ADORATION OF THE KINGS

Christmas Poems and Carols

Under the Holly-Bough

By Charles Mackay

Ye who have scorned each other,
Or injured friend or brother,
In this fast-fading year;
Ye who, by word or deed,
Have made a kind heart bleed,
Come gather here.

Let sinned against and sinning
Forget their strife's beginning,
And join in friendship now;
Be links no longer broken.
Be sweet forgiveness spoken
Under the holly-bough.

Ye who have loved each other,
Sister and friend and brother,
In this fast-fading year;
Mother and sire and child,
Young man and maiden mild,
Come gather here:

And let your hearts grow fonder,
As memory shall ponder
Each past unbroken vow.
'D loves and younger wooing
Are sweet in the renewing,
Under the holly-bough.

Ye who have nourished sadness,
Estranged from hope and gladness,
In this fast-fading year;
Ye, with o'erburdened mind,
Made aliens from your kind,
Come gather here.

Let not the useless sorrow
Pursue you night and morrow.
If e'er you hoped, hope now—
Take heart; unclod your faces,
And join in our embraces,
Under the holly-bough.

A Christmas Song

By William Makepeace Thackeray

Come wealth or want, come good or ill,
Let young and old accept their part,
And bow before the Awful Will.
And bear it with an honest heart.
Who misses or who wins the prize,
Go, lose or conquer as you can;
But if you fail or if you rise,
Be each, pray God, a gentleman.

A gentleman, or old or young
(Bear kindly with my humble lays),
The sacred chorus first was sung
Upon the first of Christmas days.
The shepherds heard it overhead—
The joyful angels raised it then,
Glory to heaven on high, it said,
And peace on earth to gentle men.

My song, save this, is little worth:
I lay the weary pen aside,
And wish you health and love and mirth,
As fits the solemn Christmas-tide,
As fits the holy Christmas birth.
Be this, good friends, our carol still—
Be peace on earth, be peace on earth,
To men of gentle will.

The Two Spruce-Trees

Upon a mountain, side by side,
Two friendly spruces stood,
And one was tall and filled with pride—
The monarch of the wood.

The other was a lowly tree.
Not more than six feet high,
And other spruces laughed to see
It struggle toward the sky.

The monarch from his dizzy height
Would shout, "Why don't you grow?"
Alas, a tempest came one night

Jest 'Fore Christmas

By Eugene Field

Father calls me William; sister calls
me Will;
Mother calls me Willie, but the fellers
call me Bill.
Mighty glad I ain't a girl—ruther be
a boy.
Without them sashes, curls an' things
that's worn by Fauntleroy!
Love to chawnk green apples an' go
swimmin' in the lake—
Hate to take the castor-ile they give
for belly-ache!
'Most all the time, the whole year
'round, they ain't no flies on me,
But jest 'fore Christmas I'm as good as
I kin be!

Got a yeller dog named Sport, sick
him on the cat;
First thing she knows she doesn't know
where she's at!
Got a clipper sled, an' when us kids go
out to slide,
'Long comes the grocery cart, an' we
all hook a ride!
But sometimes when the grocery man
is worried an' cross,
He reaches at us with his whip an'
larrups up his hoss;
An' then I laff an' holler: "Oh, ye
never teched me!"
But jest 'fore Christmas I'm as good as
I kin be!

Grammar says she hopes that when I
git to be a man,
I'll be a missionarier like her eldest
brother Dan,
As was et up by cannibals that lives on
Ceylon's Isle,
Where every prospeck pleases an' only
man is vile:
But Grammar she has never been to
see a Wild-West show,
Nor read the life of Daniel Boone, or
else, I guess, she'd know
That Buff'lo Bill and cowboys is good
enough for me!
But jest 'fore Christmas I'm as good as
I kin be!

An' then old Sport he hangs around as
solemn like an' still,
His eyes, them seem a-sayin': "What's
the matter, Little Bill?"
The old cat sneaks down off her perch
an' wonders what's become
Of them two enemies of hern that use
to make things hum!
But I'm so polite and ten' so earnestly
to biz,
That Mother says to Father: "How
improved our Willie is!"
But Father, havin' been a boy himself,
suspicious me
When jest 'fore Christmas I'm as good
as I kin be!"

For Christmas, with its lots and lots of
candy, cakes and toys,
Was made, they say, for proper kids,
and not for naughty boys;
So wash yer face and brush your hair
an' mind your p's and q's.
An' don't bust out your pantaloons an'
don't wear out yer shoes:
Say "yessum" to the ladies and "yes-
sur" to the men,
An' when there's company, don't pass
your plate for pie again;
But thinkin' of the things yer'd like to
see upon that tree,
Jest 'fore Christmas be as good as yer
kin be!

Christmas Eve



Perched high upon the holly bough
Red Robin warbles clear.

No other songster on the spray
At Christmas time is heard,
But when the Saviour's birth we keep,
We hear the Saviour's bird.

The Spanish show special kindness at this time to any ass or cow, believing that on Holy Night they breathed upon the Christchild to keep Him warm. Many other quaint old beliefs used to be common about how the animals act at Christmas time. From northern Canada comes the Indian saying that on the Holy Night the deer all kneel and look up to the Great Spirit, but that whoever spies upon them will have stiffness in his knees for all the year to come. In the German Alps it was believed that animals have the gift of speech on Christmas Eve, but that he who listens will surely hear them foretell some evil for the listener. Of a like belief Mr. Riis says that, when he was a boy :—

“All the animals knew perfectly well that the holiday had come, and kept it in their way. The watch-dog was unchained. In the midnight hour on the Holy Eve the cattle stood up in their stalls and bowed out of respect and reverence for Him who was laid in a manger when there was no room in the inn, and in that hour speech was given them, and they talked together. Claus, our neighbor's man, had seen and heard it, and every Christmas Eve I meant fully to go and be there when it happened; but always

long before that I had been led away to bed, a very sleepy boy, with all my toys hugged tight, and when I woke up the daylight shone through the frosted window-panes, and they were blowing good morning from the church tower; it would be a whole year before another Christmas. So I vowed, with a sigh at having neglected a really sacred observance, that I would be there sure on the next Christmas Eve. But it was always so, every year, and perhaps it was just as well, for Claus said that it might go ill with the one who listened, if the cows found him out."

In the older parts of Montenegro, the head of the family and his shepherd boy still follow the quaint old custom of lighting the animals to their stalls on Christmas Eve. Each takes a lighted wax candle and they go together into every stall in turn, holding the candles for a moment in each of its corners. Then, at the stable door they take stand, one at each side of it, and hold their candles high while the little shepherdess drives the animals in. One by one, sheep, goats, and oxen, they pass between the flickering lights. After that, the shepherd boy and the little shepherdess kiss each other "that the cattle may live in peace and love," they say.





Good King Wenceslas

GOOD King Wenceslas looked out
On the Feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about,
Deep, and crisp, and even.

Brightly shone the moon that night,
Though the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight,
Gath'ring winter fuel.

"Hither, page, and stand by me,
If thou know'st it telling,
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?"

"Sire, he lives a good league hence,
Underneath the mountain;
Right against the forest fence,
By St. Agnes' fountain."

"Bring me flesh, and bring me wine,
Bring me pine logs hither;
Thou and I will see him dine,
When we bear them thither."

Page and monarch forth they went,
Forth they went together;
Through the rude wind's wild lament,
And the bitter weather."

"Sire, the night is darker now,
And the wind blows stronger;
Fails my heart, I know not how,
I can go no longer."

"Mark my footsteps, good my page!
Tread thou in them boldly;
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly."

In his master's steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod
Which the saint had printed.

Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.

A Mexican "Mystery" seen by Bayard Taylor

AGAINST the wing-wall of the Hacienda del Mayo, which occupied one end of the plaza, was raised a platform, on which stood a table covered with a scarlet cloth. A rude bower of cane leaves on one end of the platform represented the manger of Bethlehem, while a cord stretched from its top across the plaza to a hole in the front of the church bore a large tinsel star, suspended by a hole in its centre. There was quite a crowd in the plaza, and very soon a procession appeared, com-

ing up from the lower part of the village. The three kings took the lead; the Virgin, mounted on an ass that gloried in a gilded saddle and rose-besprinkled mane and tail, followed them, led by the angel; and several women, with curious masks of paper, brought up the rear. Two characters, of the harlequin sort — one with a dog's head on his shoulders, and the other a bald-headed friar, with a huge hat hanging on his back — played all sorts of antics for the diversion of the crowd. After making the circuit of the plaza, the Virgin was taken to the platform, and entered the manger. King Herod took his seat at the scarlet table, with an attendant in blue coat and red sash, whom I took to be his Prime Minister. The three kings remained on their horses in front of the church; between them and the platform, under the string on which the star was to slide, walked two men in long white robes and blue hoods, with parchment folios in their hands. These were the Wise Men of the East, as one might readily know from their solemn air, and the mysterious glances which they cast toward all quarters of the heavens.

In a little while, a company of women on the platform, concealed behind a curtain, sang an angelic chorus to the tune of "*Opescator dell' onda*." At the proper moment, the Magi turned toward the platform, following the star, to which a string was conveniently attached that it might be slid along the line. The three kings followed the star till it reached the manger, when they dismounted, and inquired for the sovereign, whom it had led them to visit. They were invited upon the platform and introduced to Herod, as the only king; this did not seem to satisfy them, and, after some conversation, they retired.

By this time the star had receded to the other end of the line and commenced moving again, they following. The angel called them into the manger, where, upon their knees, they were shown a small wooden box, supposed to contain the sacred infant: they then retired, and the star brought them back no more. After this departure, King Herod declared himself greatly confused by what he had witnessed, and was very much afraid this newly found king would weaken his power. Upon consultation with his Prime Minister, the Massacre of the Innocents was decided upon, as the only means of security.

The angel, on hearing this, gave warning to the Virgin, who quickly got down from the platform, mounted her bespangled donkey, and hurried off. Herod's Prime Minister directed all the children to be handed up for execution. A boy, in ragged sarape, was caught and thrust forward; the Minister took him by the heels in spite of his kicking, and held his head on the table. The little brother and sister of the boy, thinking he was really to be decapitated, yelled at the top of their voices, in an agony of terror, which threw the crowd into a roar of laughter. King Herod brought down his sword with a whack on the table, and the Prime Minister, dipping his brush into a pot of white paint which stood before him, made a flaring cross on the boy's face. Several other boys were caught and served likewise; and finally, the two harlequins, whose kicks and struggles nearly shook down the platform. The procession then went off up the hill, followed by the whole population of the village.



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THE CHRISTMAS TREE MARKET IN NEW YORK

Breaking the Piñate

IF you were in Mexico the week before Christmas you would not find one Christmas tree, unless it were in some town where Americans have been living for a good while. But everywhere children would be talking about breaking a piñate (pronounced pin-yah-tay) as you talk of having a tree. In the small stalls set up in the plazas for the sale of Christmas gifts there are hundreds of different gayly colored piñates. Some are bowl-shaped or oval jars made out of the coarse red earthenware of Puebla, painted with dashes of yellow and black in patterns that have been copied from old Indian pottery. Others are made of paper in gay stripes of red and yellow, in shape like tissue-paper balloons, and are decorated with tinsel ornaments and streamers of bright-colored paper, such as are hung on Christmas trees. Others still are made in the shape of grotesque figures, clowns with baggy trousers, dancing girls in wide-spread skirts, monks in long cloaks, and animals. All of them, jars or paper figures, are easily breakable; they are stuffed with sweets, crackers, rattles, whistles, or any other toys which are small and light, and parents hang them — usually on Christmas Eve — from the ceiling of a room or from a branch of a tree in the courtyard. Each child of the family in turn after being blindfolded, given a long stick, and led some distance away from the hanging piñate, is allowed to grope toward where he thinks it is and to strike out at it three times in the effort to break it. If he fails, another is given the chance. Mexican families are large and often a father and all his sons live to-

gether in square, flat-roofed buildings of sun-dried brick around a common courtyard. So there is a deal of laughter and excitement as one child after another makes his trial. At last one manages to hit the piñate so that it breaks open and toys, sweets, and ornaments come down in a shower. This is the moment for which the children crowding around have been waiting, and they swoop down upon the dainties in a joyous scramble. The successful child usually receives a special prize; for, blindfolded as he is, he stands small chance of getting anything else.

Breaking the piñate usually follows a curious ceremony in which all those present walk together around the house several times chanting a litany. The procession is in memory of the night when Joseph and Mary journeyed to Bethlehem and found no room in the inn. Often even the donkey belonging to the family is brought into the ceremony. After the litany some go within the house while others outside sing a plea for admittance, which is at first roughly refused. Finally they are admitted, and another hymn is followed by feasting and merry-making, of which breaking the piñate is the children's part.



Christmas upon a Greenland Iceberg

ONE hot June day in 1869 there was a great stir in the new harbor of Bremerhaven in Germany; at its entrance lay two stout ships, the *Germania* and the *Hansa*, fully fitted out for Arctic exploration. Visitors and messengers were going back and forth. The King of Prussia himself, with many of his nobles, the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg, Schwerin, Count Bismarck, and General von Moltke among them, had come from Berlin to say Godspeed to the commander and the scientific gentlemen who were braving unknown dangers, and certain privations and hardships "for the honor of the German navy and of German science," as his Majesty expressed it.

The last of the cases of stores hoisted on board the *Hansa* were stowed away with a peculiar laughing tenderness. They were stout chests cased in lead in which friends of these explorers had placed such friendly little trifles as are inseparable from the celebration of Christmas wherever the Germans may be.

There is no place in this book for the story of their adventures in the slow voyage up beyond the ice line. In July, by some misunderstanding of signals, the two ships separated, never to meet again. In September the *Hansa* was caught in a great field of floating ice and was carried for two hundred days thereafter in the drift of the floe. An October storm so racked the ship that her captain and crew were forced to abandon her and carry everything out upon

the ice. The great coal-bin of the ship was taken out and turned into a store hut. All the supplies were taken there, the ship's three boats were carefully secured, everything was taken from the *Hansa* which could be used for fuel, and at last the ship was cut away from the ice lest in sinking she destroy them.

Then began a frightful period of drifting. Storm after storm put them in danger of a sudden death which may have seemed more desirable than waiting for the winds and currents to carry them slowly into a warmer sea and toward the natural breaking up of the ice-floe. Hope of rescue in those lonely waters was faint.

But they lived bravely and worked steadily, constructing around the main hut, from the timbers saved from the *Hansa*, small black shelters in which, all but buried in the snow, the men lived. And that they kept Christmas in true German fashion the log of the vessel tells:—

“The tree was erected in the afternoon, while the greater part of the crew took a walk; and the lonely hut shone with wonderful brightness amid the snow. Christmas upon a Greenland iceberg! The tree was artistically put together of firwood and ravelled matweed [hemp?], and Dr. Laube had saved a twist of wax taper for the illumination. Chains of colored paper and newly baked cakes were not wanting, and the men had made a knapsack and a revolver case as a present for the captain. We opened the leaden chests of presents from Professor Hochstetter and the Geological Society, and were much amused by their contents. Each man had a glass of



From paintings by Raphael

HEADS OF THE CHRIST CHILD

port wine; and we then turned over the old newspapers which we found in the chests, and drew lots for the presents, which consisted of small musical instruments, such as fifes, jews'-harps, trumpets, etc., with draughts and other games, puppets, crackers, etc. In the evening we feasted on chocolate and gingerbread."

"We observed the day very quietly," wrote Dr. Laube in his diary. "If this Christmas be the last we are to see, it was at least a cheerful one; but should a happy return home be decreed for us, the next will, we trust, be a far brighter. May God so grant!"

And He did. But that is not a Christmas story, and you will have to look elsewhere for it.

Luther's Christmas Carol for Children

GOOD news from Heaven the angels bring,
Glad tidings to the earth they sing:
To us this day a child is given,
To crown us with the joy of heaven.

This is the Christ, our Lord and God,
Who in all need shall aid afford:
He will Himself our Saviour be,
From sin and sorrow set us free.

To us that blessedness He brings,
Which from the Father's bounty springs:
That in the heavenly realm we may
With Him enjoy eternal day.

All hail, Thou noble Guest, this morn,
Whose love did not the sinner scorn!
In my distress Thou cam'st to me:
What thanks shall I return to Thee?

Were earth a thousand times as fair,
Beset with gold and jewels rare,
She yet were far too poor to be
A narrow cradle, Lord, for Thee.

Ah, dearest Jesus, Holy Child!
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.

Praise God upon His heavenly throne,
Who gave to us His only Son:
For this His hosts, on joyful wing,
A blest New Year of mercy sing.



The Good Night in Spain

IF you were a child in Spain, you would not be talking of Christmas trees in the late December days, but of *navidades*, or "nativities." These are tiny models of a scene supposed to be Bethlehem. Some of them are very simple, made of cardboard, colored paper, bits of stone and sand. On one side is a hill, built up of paper or plaster, and in the side of it is the cave to which the gentle cattle were used to come for food and shelter. By its crude match-wood manger stand or sit little figures of the Holy Family. Often these are modelled from beautiful designs, the work of famous artists who put their highest skill into creating the tiny images of the mother and the Holy Child. Outside the cave stand the patient oxen, and perhaps the donkey upon which the Infant Christ is to be carried out of the reach of Herod. Overhead sparkles a shining star. Some of these simple "nativities" can be bought for a few cents. Others made of better materials, or with greater care, and with many figures, are more costly. These have, besides the Holy Family, perhaps, a fire of ruddy tinfoil around which shepherds gather, looking, in their straight brown cloaks, as if they might have stepped from your Noah's ark, and back of them, on a hillside of green cloth, little white wool lambs feed quietly. In still another you may even see a smuggler with a slouch hat pulled down over his eyes, hiding with a load of tobacco behind a paper rock to leave the road free for the Three Kings who in all their tinsel go journeying to worship the Holy Child. The roads are

rough with bits of cork, the river is a strip of glass, and the bridge over which the camels of the Wise Men pass is clearly of paper stone; the rabbit hiding in the evergreens is quite as large as the donkey saddled for the flight into Egypt; but in the magic of "the Holy Night" all seem to be real, to live and feel, so natural and tender is the children's faith in these simple "nativities," which are repeated on a larger scale in all the churches.

On Christmas Eve, or the Good Night, as the Spanish children say, every one must go to the church for the midnight mass, and of course no one goes to bed before that. Early in the dusk the toy dealers bring their booths and flaming naphtha torches to the village plaza, and the children swarm around them like flies to sweets. All the week before groups of these children have been going from door to door at night singing to familiar tunes ballads which tell the story of the Nativity, and he is a poor Spaniard who cannot find some small coins for the band of singers. On Holy Night, too, after they have made the small round of the toy-dealers' stands, they go to each other's houses to look at the different nativities and sing one carol after another in which a single voice carries a verse, remembered or made up at the time, and the others join in the refrain while two of them dance. At the end of each verse the two whose turn it has been to dance go up to the nativity with flushed cheeks and bright eyes, open wide their little arms and fall on their knees, with the exclamation "For Thee." In some places the children will instead carry a nativity into the plaza, singing carols in which every one joins.



One such carol is this lullaby:—

“The Baby Child of Mary,
Now cradle He has none;
His father is a carpenter
And he shall make Him one.
*His father is a carpenter
And he shall make Him one.*”

“The Lady, good St. Anna,
The Lord, St. Joachim,
They rock the Baby’s cradle
That sleep may come to Him.
*They rock the Baby’s cradle
That sleep may come to Him.*”

“Then sleep thou, too, my baby,
My little heart so dear;
The Virgin is beside thee,
The Son of God is near.
*The Virgin is beside thee,
The Son of God is near.”*



A Christmas Tree in Japan

It was a huge Christmas tree, the first that had ever grown in our compound,¹ for the children of our servants and writers and employees, who make up the number of our Legation population to close on two hundred. I could not have the tree on Christmas Day, owing to various engagements; so it was fixed for January 3, and was quite the most successful entertainment I ever gave!

When I undertook it, I confess that I had no idea how many little ones belonged to the compound. I sent our good Ogita round to invite them all solemnly to come to Ichiban (Number One) on the 3d at five o'clock. Ogita threw himself into the business with delighted good-will, having five little people of his own to include in the invitation; but all the servants were eager to help as soon as they knew we were preparing a treat for the children. That is work which would always appeal to Japanese of any age or class. No trouble is too great, if it brings pleasure to the "treasure flowers," as the babies are called. Some of them were not little, and these were more difficult to buy presents for; but after many cold hours passed in the different bazaars, it seemed to me that there must be something for everybody, although we had really spent very little money.

The wares were so quaint and pretty that it was a pleasure to sort and handle them. There were work-boxes in beautiful

¹ The British Legation compound is the enclosure in which the official representatives of the English government in any Japanese city live with their assistants, families, and servants.

polished woods, with drawers fitting so perfectly that when you closed one the compressed air at once shot out another. There were mirrors enclosed in charming embroidered cases; for where mirrors are mostly made of metal, people learn not to let them get scratched. There were dollies of every size, and dolls' houses and furniture, kitchens, farmyards, rice-pounding machines—all made in the tiniest proportions, such as it seemed no human fingers could really have handled. For the elder boys we bought books, school-boxes with every school requisite contained in a square the size of one's hand, and penknives and scissors, which are greatly prized as being of foreign manufacture. For decorations we had an abundant choice of materials. I got forests of willow branches decorated with artificial fruits; pink and white balls made of rice paste, which are threaded on the twigs; surprise shells of the same paste, two lightly stuck together in the form of a double scallop shell, and full of miniature toys; *kanzashi*, or ornamental hairpins for the girls, made flowers of gold and silver among my dark pine branches; and I wasted precious minutes in opening and shutting these dainty roses—buds until you press a spring, when they open suddenly into a full-blown rose. But the most beautiful things on my tree were the icicles, which hung in scores from its sombre foliage, catching rosy gleams of light from our lamps as we worked late into the night. These were—chopsticks, long glass chopsticks, which I discovered in the bazaar; and I am sure Santa Klaus himself could not have told them from icicles. Of course every present must be labelled with a child's name, and here my troubles began. Ogita was told to make out a correct list

of names and ages, with some reference to the calling of the parents; for even here rank and precedence must be observed, or terrible heart-burnings might follow. The list came at last, and if it were not so long, I would send it to you complete, for it is a curiosity. Imagine such complicated titles as these: "Minister's second cook's girl, Ume, age 2; Minister's servant's cousin's boy, age 11;" "Student's interpreter's teacher's girl;" "Vice-Consul's jinrikisha-man's boy." And so it went on, till there were fifty-eight of them of all ages, from one up to nineteen. Some of them, indeed, were less than a year old; and I was amused on the evening of the 2d at having the list brought back to me with this note (Ogita's English is still highly individual!) "Marked X is declined to the invitation." On looking down the column, I found that ominous looking cross only against one name, that of Yasu, daughter of Ito Kanejiro, Mr. G——'s cook. This recalcitrant little person turned out to be six weeks old — an early age for parties even nowadays. Miss Yasu, having been born in November, was put down in the following January as two years old, after the puzzling Japanese fashion. Then I found that they would write boys as girls, girls as boys, grown-ups as babies, and so on. Even at the last moment a doll had to be turned into a sword, a toy tea-set into a work-box, a history of Europe into a rattle; but people who grow Christmas trees are prepared for such small contingencies, and no one knew anything about it when on Friday afternoon the great tree slowly glowed into a pyramid of light, and a long procession of little Japs was marshalled in, with great solemnity and many bows, till they stood, a delighted, wide-eyed crowd,



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MAKING GLASS AND TINSEL ORNAMENTS FOR CHRISTMAS TREES

round the beautiful shining thing, the first Christmas tree any of them had ever seen. It was worth all the trouble to see the gasp of surprise and delight, the evident fear that the whole thing might be unreal and suddenly fade away. One little man of two fell flat on his back with amazement, tried to rise and have another look, and in so doing rolled over on his nose, where he lay quite silent till his relatives rescued him. Behind the children stood the mothers, quite as pleased as they, and with them one very old lady with a little child on her back.

The children stood, the little ones in front and the taller ones behind, in a semicircle, and the many lights showed their bright faces and gorgeous costumes, for no one would be outdone by another in smartness—I fancy the poorer women had borrowed from richer neighbors—and the result was picturesque in the extreme. The older girls had their heads beautifully dressed, with flowers and pins and rolls of scarlet crape knotted in between the coils; their dresses were pale green or blue, with bright linings and stiff silk obis; but the little ones were a blaze of scarlet, green, geranium pink, and orange, their long sleeves sweeping the ground, and the huge flower patterns on their garments making them look like live flowers as they moved about on the dark velvet carpet. When they had gazed their fill, they were called up to me one by one, Ogita addressing them all as “San” (Miss or Mr.), even if they could only toddle, and I gave them their serious presents with their names, written in Japanese and English, tied on with red ribbon—an attention which, as I was afterwards told, they appreciated

greatly. It seemed to me that they never would end; their size varied from a wee mite who could not carry its own toys to a tall, handsome student of sixteen, or a gorgeous young lady in green and mauve crape, and a head that must have taken the best part of the day to dress.

In one thing they were all alike; their manners were perfect. There was no pushing or grasping, no glances of envy at what other children received, no false shyness in their sweet, happy way of expressing their thanks. I was puzzled by one thing about the children: although we kept giving them sweets and oranges off the tree, every time I looked around the big circle all were empty-handed again, and it really seemed as if they must have swallowed the gifts, gold paper and ribbon and all. But at last I noticed that their square, hanging sleeves began to have a strange, lumpy appearance, like a conjurer's waistcoat just before he produces twenty-four bowls of live goldfish from his internal economy; and then I understood that the plunder was at once dropped into these great sleeves, so as to leave hands free for anything else that Okusama might think good to bestow. One little lady, O'Haru San, aged three, got so overloaded with goodies and toys that they kept rolling out of her sleeves, to the great delight of the Brown Ambassador dachshund, Tip, who pounced on them like lightning, and was also convicted of nibbling at cakes on the lower branches of the tree.

The bigger children would not take second editions of presents, and answered, "Honorable thanks, I have!" if

offered more than they thought their share; but babies are babies all the world over! When the distribution was finished at last, I got a Japanese gentleman to tell them the story of Christmas, the children's feast; and then they came up one by one to say "*Sayonara*" ("Since it must be," the Japanese farewell), and "*Arigato gozaimasu*" ("The honorable thanks").

"Come back next year," I said; and then the last presents were given out—beautiful lanterns, red, lighted, and hung on what Ogita calls bumboos, to light the guests home with. One tiny maiden refused to go, and flung herself on the floor in a passion of weeping, saying that Okusama's house was too beautiful to leave, and she would stay with me always—yes, she would! Only the sight of the lighted lantern, bobbing on a stick twice as long as herself, persuaded her to return to her own home in the servants' quarters. I stood on the step, the same step where I had set the fireflies free one warm night last summer, and watched the little people scatter over the lawns, and disappear into the dark shrubberies, their round, red lights dancing and shifting as they went, just as if my fireflies had come back, on red wings this time, to light my little friends to bed.



From Far Away

FROM far away we come to you.

The snow in the street, and the wind on the door,
To tell of great tidings, strange and true.

Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

From far away we come to you,

To tell of great tidings, strange and true.

For as we wandered far and wide,

The snow in the street, and the wind on the door,
What hap do you deem there should us betide?

Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

Under a bent when the night was deep,

The snow in the street, and the wind on the door,
There lay three shepherds, tending their sheep.

Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

“O ye shepherds, what have ye seen,

The snow in the street, and the wind on the door,
To stay your sorrow and heal your teen?”

Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

“In an ox stall this night we saw,

The snow in the street, and the wind on the door,
A Babe and a maid without a flaw.

Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

“There was an old man there beside;

The snow in the street, and the wind on the door,



His hair was white, and his hood was wide.

Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

“And as we gazed this thing upon,

The snow in the street, and the wind on the door,
Those twain knelt down to the little one.

Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

“And a marvellous song we straight did hear,

The snow in the street, and the wind on the door,
That slew our sorrow and healed our care.”

Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

News of a fair and a marvellous thing,

The snow in the street, and the wind on the door,
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, we sing.

Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

From far away we come to you,

To tell of great tidings, strange and true.

Lordings, listen to our Lay

LORDINGS, listen to our lay—

We have come from far away

To seek Christmas;

In this mansion we are told

He his yearly feast doth hold:

’Tis to-day!

May joy come from God above,

To all those who Christmas love.

Where the Christmas Toys Come From

ALMOST all the wooden toys come from Germany, where peasants in the mountains of the Tyrol and Bavaria still make them by hand. A herd-boy on the hillside will see that his cattle are safely feeding in a narrow valley which they cannot leave without passing him, and then he will sit on the grass or on a rock and whittle and whistle or jodel as the soft wood shapes itself in his fingers, through a long summer day. And during the winter, while the snow lies deep on the mountain paths, entire families give their time to making Noah's arks, toy villages with stiff little green trees, toy furniture, carved figures of all kinds. Anything which a man's knife can make from poplar or plane wood is carved during the long weeks when outdoor work is impossible. At one time whole German villages used to work in their own homes on cheap wooden toys of all kinds. Nowadays, since the invention of the machines by which the simpler forms are made, most of the toy trades have been swept into the factories of German cities.

Toy reins, such as you see with tinkling sleigh-bells on them, may be woven elsewhere in New England, but it is fairly certain that the bells at least were made in Connecticut, where the industry is a very old one, and where most of the sleigh-bells in the country have been made, as well as cow-bells and the tiny tinkler on the tea-table. And, naturally, the state in which are so many clock factories produces those toys which are made to go by a winding key.

Hundreds of thousands of tin trumpets, and other toy musical instruments which used to be made in France and Germany, are now made in this country, mainly in Pennsylvania and New York. It is fascinating to watch the making of them by machinery. Pull a handle here! Click! down comes a frame and a long sheet of metal is cut into pieces of the exact shape wanted. See! the frame on which the metal rested is a moving belt bringing a fresh sheet of metal under the stamps and at the same time carrying the cut pieces forward over a row of steel cones where a set of clamps like steel jaws catches each separate bit. The clamps close once, nip! open, and each cone pushes forward with a jerk into another which with one motion adds a mouthpiece. What passes on now is a bent tube which needs only a touch of solder to keep it closed, a few rings of paint to make it gay, and perhaps a curved handle, to be a very presentable toy trumpet.

Drums are almost all made in Massachusetts; marbles, the best of them, come from Saxony; the old-fashioned kinds of music-boxes, some of them very elaborate and beautiful, still come from Switzerland. Glass ornaments for Christmas trees are made in Germany; many of the tinsel and cut-paper ornaments also come from Nuremberg and other German cities which are the great toy markets of the world. In one French village near Paris almost all the bone dominoes have been made for years; another section of France turns out nearly all the bone chessmen—such figures as Alice found in the Looking-Glass country; and

a quantity of the furry rabbits, silky-haired dogs, and woolly lambs on green-painted bellows which bleat *ba-a-a*, have been made by one Parisian family for many years. The old proprietor, his sons and daughters and even grandchildren, have lived and worked together at the very top of an old house in one of the side streets of the city, from a time beyond the memory of all but few.

As for dolls — the making of a Christmas doll — that is another story.

The Making of a Christmas Doll

DOES it seem to you that it would be a delightful business to make hundreds of thousands of dolls every year? H'm! Does this huge kettle of bad-smelling mush make you think of the dainty, smiling dolls in the toy-shop window? Dolly is made, though you would never guess it, of chopped up bits of old kid gloves and pieces of cardboard boiled to a pulp in a gum made from the horns of goats. And here is a man shovelling sawdust into a kettle half full of boiling water. Now he is turning the mass into a big mixing trough, adding one shovelful after another of the gluey mush. The machinery creaks and turns and cuts and slaps as this mixture is kneaded into a composition pulp. Now he is carrying some of it in a hod, for all the world like sticky mortar, to a weighing table! Sweep! it is spread out in an even thickness. Clip! down come the knives which part it into the right quanti-



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DOLL-MAKING

ties, and it is swiftly pressed and moulded to the shape of a body, an arm, or a leg. In one factory alone the parts of as many as forty thousand dolls are thus made in one day, and the ugly, greenish shapes set aside to harden. Another day they pass quickly under the brushes in the painters' hands after which they have the more familiar rosy pink color, and dolly can now be put together except for the head.

Of these dolls the heads are to be of porcelain. Once for all, long ago, some artist made the model of which many duplicate moulds stand ready. Into these moulds liquid porcelain clay is poured; before it hardens the openings for the eyes are cut and tiny holes made by which it can be joined to a body. After the moulds are opened, as the rows and rows of little heads stand in metal trays, a painter comes by, covers them with a glaze-wash, tints the cheeks and outlines the brows and lashes. Now into the oven goes the tray for hours of slow baking. But even with the head sewed on we have but a sad-looking dolly, both blind and bald.

If all goes well, the eyes and the wig come next. The eyes are not made in this factory at all. They come from Germany, and it would probably give you a queer, scared feeling to see the making of them. Look into this long, dark room, and when your eyes are a little used to the strange shadowiness, you will see that down its sides there are rows of tables, before each of which sits a woman with a blue-flame gas lamp in front of her. At little

distances are retorts of glowing molten glass, and each woman dips her short glass tube into the melted glass, and, keeping it soft by the help of that weird blue flame of the blowpipe jet, blows a little oblong globe which she colors white for the eyeball, and then upon it paints a pupil of blue, brown, or black, as the doll-makers may have ordered. The musical click which you hear all the time is the sharp stroke which breaks the finished and cooled eye from the glass rod, letting it drop into a box lined with cotton by her side. This boy coming out has been collecting them, and it makes us shiver to see those hundreds of eyes rolling uncannily at us from the bottom of his basket. Come away!

A wig for an inexpensive doll is an easy matter; the chosen strands of hair are laid along a double thread, which passes below one strand and above the next. This thread makes the "part," and under it is stuck a bit of paste-board by which the wig is fastened on. A quick-fingered French woman can turn out over a hundred dozen such wigs in a day. And with the wig dolly is made at last.

Her clothes, of course, are a separate matter, just as yours are; there are dolls' shoemakers, and dolls' dress-makers, and the elaborate completeness of dolly's outfit depends only upon the price one is willing to pay.



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WIG-MAKING

Irina's Day on the Estates

IRINA is a Russian who answers promptly if you ask her what Christmas she remembers best, "The one we spent on the estates." But that may be because it was so unusual to be there at all in the winter. Christmas Eve is the great time in Russia, but Santa Claus does not come until evening and the day before Christmas being a fast-day is usually somewhat depressing.

Old Mashinka, who comes in to open the heavy, outer shutters, usually has some lively gossip to tell while she lets in the light. Perhaps wolves slipped into the courtyard in the night and were fighting with the watch-dogs; perhaps the snow has fallen again and is so deep that Ivan and the stablemen have been out since daybreak cutting new paths to the kitchens, stables, and farm buildings, and breaking out the roads. Or perhaps Dmitri, who moved yesterday into a new house, took with him a cock and hen, and this morning the cock refused to crow at dawn so that all the family are sure that evil fortune will enter the house with the new year. But on this morning she has no news to tell; she moves silently and slowly, for it is a fast-day.

Even Irina, who is always ready to run and jump, feels oppressed by the still, silent house. The dining room is desolate with its breakfastless table, usually so cosy with its steaming samovar. As a rule they are at this time in St. Petersburg where, though Irina stays qui-

etly all day in an upper room, except when attending church services, she can at least look out upon all the coming and going on the river and the Nevski Prospect. But this year Andrei the steward is raising questions about the plans and locations for new stables and barns, so they are here where everything is depressingly still and silent, and upstairs her father and mother are praying in their rooms. So she puts on fur-lined boots, a long fur coat with deep collar, and a fur cap which comes well down over the forehead, and once outside the house finds herself in the thick forest. Further on she comes to a frozen river, and fast-days and solemn services are all forgotten, for there are her two fur-wrapped brothers busy with a little sledge. The red scarves of the boys are taken for guiding reins, and far along the ice for two hours or more she drives her team. They have passed beyond the forest and out upon the steppes, where for miles ahead no trees are to be seen except where willows mark the curve of the river, or a few stunted saplings show black against the snow. On one side is a long, low sheepfold belonging to Irina's father, and out comes the shepherd with a clamor of dogs. He has no chairs, so he throws down three heaps of clean straw for the children to sit on; and he, too, forgets that it is a fast-day as he reaches cakes of dark brown bread from a shelf below the tiny square window, and pours for them cups of goats' milk. Black crust and all—it goes quickly, and then they rest and stroke the half-tamed sheep that come to nibble the straw while the shepherd tells the children



stories. He cannot read, to be sure, but when he was a boy his old grandmother told them to him. Perhaps, because it is the Christmas season, he tells them of the old woman whom the Russians call Babouscka and the Italians Befana. Irina's favorite is one that would remind you of Cinderella, although the fairy godmother is much more like an old witch; and as the children start off for home they wonder a little fearfully if this forest is not very like the one in the shepherd's story.

On arriving home they confess their sins — only the little matter of the rye bread is really forgotten. Everybody is busy; the cook is getting the supper, and father in the drawing-room has the door locked. Some one has said there will be no Christmas tree, for there are no shops here; but why was mother away for four days, and why did that pedler who came by a few days ago stay so long? Irina finds a book, curls up on a rug, and tries to read, but she does not understand Kryloff's "Fables" very well; the day out-doors has made her drowsy and she does not quite know what becomes of the time until her brothers shake her a little, the clock rings out "Cuckoo" six times, and then open comes the door. There *is* a Christmas tree after all, a tall one with a shining star at the top. Hundreds of burning candles light it up, and tiny wax figures dance among hanging oranges. At the foot of the tree lie four or five heaps of parcels,—ah, then, mother *was* shopping; no one is forgotten and every one is merry. Then comes Pavel to say that supper is ready. But the

white cloth looks very different from usual; it is not laid smoothly at all. Underneath it has been spread a layer of hay, and each one as he sits down pulls out a straw. Irina gives a cry of joy: her piece is quite complete, with its yellow, dried flower—which shows that she will be lucky all the next year.

There is no meat at this Christmas Eve supper, only fish dishes and the special *Kostya*, or puddings which belong to the season very much as do mince pie and plum pudding in England. Of these puddings there are two kinds, — the white *Kostya*, made of rice, almonds, and raisins, and the black *Kostya*, made of honey, barley, and walnuts.

During supper the children from the village school which Irina's mother has started come and sing carols outside the window until Pavel with a handful of coins tells them to be off. Other young villagers follow to acknowledge their gifts with more singing. Lastly comes the church choir, who are invited in to supper after Irina and her brothers have returned to the tree and their new toys. For each there is a gift and from each a torrent of good wishes.

This practice of carol singing is probably in its origin akin to the religious processions which one may see on any holy day in all the villages of Greece, the Balkan provinces, and up through Russia, — wherever, in fact, the Greek church has diverted into the service of religion the old customs of the people. For centuries back and probably long before the Christian era, it was the practice of the young people here and elsewhere to gather into bands and go about the country roads at this

time of year singing hymns which were at first, no doubt, songs of rejoicing that the shortest days were over and the sun returning to the world again. Nowadays the songs are chants or carols, and the village boys are proud to carry in religious processions pictures of the saints and the banners of the church.

A Visit from St. Nicholas

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap—
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave a lustre of midday to objects below;
When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver so lively and quick
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick!
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled and shouted, and called them by name:

“Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donner and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch, to the top of the wall!
Now, dash away, dash away, dash away all!”
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys—and St. Nicholas, too.
And then in a twinkling I heard on the roof,
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a pedler just opening his pack.
His eyes, how they twinkled! his dimples, how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry;
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow.
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.
He had a broad face and a little round belly
That shook, when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly.
He was chubby and plump—a right jolly old elf;
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself.
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.



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A CHRISTMAS TREE AT THE IMMIGRANT STATION, NEW YORK

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.
He sprang in his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle;
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight:
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!"

The Cratchits' Christmas Dinner

You might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a feathered phenomenon, to which a black swan was a matter of course; and in truth, it was something like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a little saucepan) hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigor; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long-expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all around the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two

young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried Hurrah!

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavor, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by the apple sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone on the dish), they hadn't ate it all at last! Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits in particular were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows! But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone—too nervous to bear witnesses—to take the pudding up and bring it in.

Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back yard, and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose; a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastry cook's next door to each other, with a laundress next door to that! That was the pudding. In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered, flushed, but smiling proudly, with the pudding like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly, too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for so large a family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing. At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovelful of chestnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass—two tumblers and a custard-cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob proposed:

"A merry Christmas to all, my dears. God bless us!"

Which all the family reëchoed.

"God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim the last of all.



After the Christmas Dinner

WHEN dinner had had time to settle and all the kitchen work was done, Father took his seat at the end of the long table, with all the household gathered about, the servants included and the baby without fail, and read the story of The Child: "And it came to pass in those days," while Mother hushed the baby. Then we sang together "A Child is Born in Bethlehem," which was the simplest of our hymns, and also the one we children loved best, for it told of how in heaven we were to walk to church

"On sky-blue carpets, star-bedeckt,"

which was a great comfort. Children love beautiful things, and we had few of them. The great and precious treasure in our house was the rag carpet in the spare room, which we were allowed to enter only on festive occasions such as Christmas. It had an orange streak in it which I can see to this day. Whenever I come across one that even remotely suggests it, it gives me yet a kind of solemn feeling. We had no piano, — that was a luxury in those days, — and Father was not a singer, but he led on bravely with his tremulous bass and we all joined in, Ane the cook and Maria the housemaid furtively wiping their eyes with their aprons, for they were good and pious folk and this was their Christmas service. So we sang the ten verses to end, with their refrain "Hallelujah! hallelujah!" that always seemed to me to open the very gates of Yule.



"WE JOINED HANDS AND DANCED AROUND THE TREE"

And it did, literally; for when the last hallelujah died away, the door of the spare room was flung wide and there stood the Christmas tree, all shining lights, and the baby was borne in, wide-eyed, to be the first, as was proper; for was not this The Child's holiday? Unconsciously we all gave way to those who were nearest Him, who had most recently come from His presence, and were therefore in closest touch with the spirit of the holiday. So, when we joined hands and danced around the tree, Father held the baby, and we laughed and were happy as the little one crowed his joy and stretched the tiny arms toward the light.

Hang up the Baby's Stocking

HANG up the baby's stocking:

Be sure you don't forget;

The dear little dimpled darling!

She ne'er saw Christmas yet;

But I've told her all about it,

And she opened her big blue eyes;

And I'm sure she understood it—

She looked so funny and wise.

Dear! what a tiny stocking!

It doesn't take much to hold

Such little pink toes as baby's

Away from the frost and cold;

But then for the baby's Christmas

It will never do at all;

Why, Santa wouldn't be looking
For anything half so small.

I know what will do for the baby.
I've thought of the very best plan:
I'll borrow a stocking of grandma,
The longest that ever I can;
And you'll hang it by mine, dear mother,
Right here in the corner, so!
And write a letter to Santa,
And fasten it on the toe.

Write, "This is the baby's stocking
That hangs in the corner here;
You never have seen her, Santa,
For she only came this year;
But she's just the blessedest baby!
And now before you go,
Just cram her stocking with goodies,
From the top clean down to the toe."

A German Christmas

IN Germany a little girl begins to think about Christmas almost as soon as she gets back from a summer holiday, for it is still very much the custom there to make something yourself for those you love best, and German girls learn while they are still little to embroider beautifully all kinds of articles for household use,—a monogram on a fine handkerchief, or spray

of flowers on a bit of linen to wear at the neck. An older girl makes such things as a canvas traveller's-case, or a set of shoe-bags, embroiders a sofa-cushion or knits a silk necktie. Mothers and aunts are more likely to make soberly useful gifts of stockings, underclothing, dresses; nothing is thought out-of-place. But every one must give to every one else. That is *law*. And every one aims to keep as a secret what she is making; it must be hidden at least from the one for whom it is intended, so there is quite an air of "I know something nice, but I cannot tell it," about a German household through all the weeks before the holiday.

About a fortnight before Christmas the fair begins which Mrs. Sidgwick tells us is to be seen "in any one of the old German cities in the hill country, when the streets and the open places are covered with crisp clean snow, and the mountains are white with it, and the moon shines on the ancient houses, and the tinkle of sledge bells reaches you when you escape from the din of the market, and look down at the bustle of it from some silent place, a high window, perhaps, or the high empty steps leading into the cathedral. The air is cold and still, and heavy with the scent of the Christmas trees brought from the forest for the pleasure of the children. Day by day you see the rows of them growing thinner, and if you go to the market on Christmas Eve itself you will find only a few trees left out in the cold. The market is empty, the peasants are harnessing their horses or their oxen, the women are packing up their unsold goods. In every home in the city one of the trees that scented the open air about a week ago is shining now with lights and

little gilded nuts and apples, and is helping to make that Christmas smell, all compact of the pine forest, wax candles, cakes, and painted toys, you must associate so long as you live with Christmas in Germany."

We have Christmas trees in plenty, but to the German mind we have them all wrong. In the first place, their trees are small, and every one, from the Emperor down to the poorest laborer, has a tree. But he has it at home, on Christmas Eve if he can, less often on Christmas Day, and only sometimes on the day after, which they call the Second Christmas Day. A German family never invites a *party* to its Christmas tree, only relatives or intimate friends. As a rule, there is one tree, fixed on a small stand in the centre of a large square table covered with a snow-white cloth, and around the tree the presents are arranged, those for each person in a separate pile. The tree is lighted for beauty, and is decorated with ornaments of glass and tinsel, sweetmeats, apples, gilded nuts, and a few very small toys. Some of the sweetmeats made for German trees are very elaborate. There are *Kringeln*, transparent sugar candies twisted in figure eights or circles, so that they easily hang on. There are sugar candy animals of every shape and color; and here and there a fascinating scene in colored sugar on a white background, a sportsman in a red coat, perhaps, pointing his gun at an enormous rabbit that sits up almost touching the end of the gun-barrel. The celebrated *Lübecker Marzipan* (a kind of almond paste which you have tasted, maybe, on bride-cake) imitates all kinds of fruit and vegetables so well that they can easily be mistaken for real.

The trees are set in the front rooms and the curtains are drawn up to give any passer-by a glimpse of their beauty. The family gathers in the room behind, sometimes a carol or hymn is sung, and at its end suddenly the parlor doors fly back, showing the little green tree all alight and the piles of presents for every one. Then comes a scramble and search for one's own pile,—a long silence while parcels are opened breathlessly. Such a handshaking and embracing and thanking as follows!

In some families where there are several children and plenty of money, each person may have a tree of his own, and at any rate will have his own table covered with presents and things to eat. Of such a family the mother writes:—

Every time the three babies go into the garden they expect to meet the Christ Child with His arms full of gifts. They firmly believe that it is thus their presents are brought, and it is such a charming idea that Christmas would be worth celebrating for its sake alone.

The library is uninhabitable for several days before and after, as it is there that we have the trees and presents. All down one side are the trees, and the other three sides are lined with tables, a separate one for each person in the house. When trees are lighted, and stand in their radiance shining down on the happy faces, I forget all the trouble it has been, and the number of times I have had to run up and down stairs, and the various aches in head and feet, and enjoy myself as much as anybody. First the June baby is ushered in, then the others and ourselves

according to age, then the servants, then come the head inspector and his family, and other inspectors from the different farms, the mamsells, the bookkeepers and secretaries, and then all the children, troops and troops of them—the big ones leading the little ones by the hand and carrying the babies in their arms, and the mothers peeping round the door. As many as can get in stand in front of the trees, and sing two or three carols; then they are given their presents, and go off triumphantly, making room for the next batch. My three babies sung lustily, too, whether they happened to know what was being sung or not. . . .

When they came to say good night they were all very pale and subdued. The April baby had an exhausted-looking Japanese doll with her, which she said she was taking to bed, not because she liked him, but she was so sorry for him, he seemed so very tired. They kissed me absently, and went away, only the April baby glancing at the trees as she passed and making them a courtesy.

“Good-by, trees,” I heard her say; and then she made the Japanese doll bow to them, which he did, in a very languid and blasé fashion. “You’ll never see such trees again,” she told him, giving him a vindictive shake, “for you’ll be brokened long before next time.”

She went out, but came back as though she had forgotten something.

“Thank the Christkind so much, Mummy, won’t you, for all the lovely things He brought us. I suppose you’re writing to Him now, isn’t you?”

Crowded Out

Nobody ain't Christmas shoppin'

Fur his stockin',

Nobody ain't cotch no turkey,

Nobody ain't bake no pie.

Nobody's laid nuthin' by;

Santa Claus don't cut no figger

Fur his mammy's little nigger.

Seems lak everybody's rushin'

An' er crushin';

Crowdin' shops an' jammin' trolleys,

Buyin' shoes an' shirts an' toys

Fur de white folks' girls an' boys;

But no hobby-horse ain't rockin'

Fur his little wore-out stockin'.

He ain't quar'lin', recollec',

He don't spec

Nuthin' — it's his not expectin'

Makes his mammy wish — O Laws! —

Fur er nigger Santy Claus,

Totin' jus' er toy balloon

Fur his mammy's little coon.

An English "Adoration"

ART in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was far more closely connected with the church than it is to-day. The most beautiful buildings were those of the church, and the art of painting was soon called upon for their decoration. Books at that time were rare and costly, and the stories of the saints whose "holydays" were times of festivity for the people, were mostly handed down by word of mouth, and often with a good deal of confusion of times and people. And naturally, when the rich men of 1300 called in a workman to decorate a church or to paint a panel which could be moved from one building to another, they liked to see on their walls pictures of their favorite saints and heroes, pictures which reminded them of the stories they could not read. It made no difference to them if saint and hero and king lived hundreds of years apart.

There is one such picture, one of the oldest in England, so old that no one knows who painted it, which is interesting because it is so easy to see that the king who ordered it painted was thinking of the old Christmas story of the Adoration of the Magi, who were always thought of in the Middle Ages as being kings. The picture is painted on two wooden panels, joined with hinges so that it can be closed, and is in bright colors against a background of gold.

The English king who probably ordered it to celebrate his coronation was Richard II. of England, son of the



famous Black Prince. One likes to think that although he thought of himself as one of a long line of kings ruling by divine right, whom it was natural to see surrounded by persons royal and divine, yet he wished to be painted not in the act of receiving but of giving homage. After all, in spite of the king's crown and the robe of state, too big for a child's figure, he was only a boy barely eleven, and whatever he became later here he is shown offering his kingdom to the Holy Child in His Mother's arms.

There was a special reason for Richard's having his picture resemble pictures of the Adoration of the Magi for the Day of the Kings, January 6, was not only his own birthday, but also the day upon which he was crowned. And an account of his coronation tells us that after the ceremony he made an offering at the Shrine of Our Lady at Pewe, nearby, of "eleven angels," one for each year of his young life. Exactly what these eleven angels were no one now knows; they may have been gold coins with an angel stamped upon them, or they may have been small images. But perhaps he remembered his eleven years and this offering when he told the painter to surround Mother Mary with the eleven angels in sapphire blue whom you see in the picture. One sees at least that they are *his* angels, for each wears his special badge, the Jewel of the White Hart, and the Collar of Broom-pods. Almost all the Magi pictures represent one of the kings as kneeling, with the two others standing behind him, and one can imagine Richard boyishly choosing the other two kings. He was crowned in Westminster Ab-

bey, so it is natural enough that one of them should be Edward the Confessor who founded the Abbey; the other, holding an arrow, is St. Edmund, an early king of England who is said to have been shot to death with arrows by the Danes, because he refused to abandon Christianity. Joseph, too, is a customary figure in paintings of the Adoration, but cannot you hear the boy king saying, "No, I do not want St. Joseph; my father died in midsummer so I really became king about the time of St. John's Day, if I *am* crowned at Epiphany; so I will have St. John with a lamb and Edward the Confessor; and Edward shall hold a ring?" There is a pretty story that St. John the Evangelist, wandering in the disguise of a beggar, asked alms of King Edward the Confessor; and, that the king, rather than refuse a poor man, gave him a ring from his finger, because he had no money with him. And it would be so like a boy not to care that the two St. Johns were not at all the same. That which mattered is that one of the angels was holding toward the Holy Child's reaching hands the banner of England as the gift of the kneeling boy.



The Children's Own Saint

WHAT a most convenient thing it is that good St. Nicholas does not have to keep the Christmas holiday in all the world at once! He has been the children's own saint, you know, ever since he ceased to be a bishop in far-away Asia Minor. The oldest story we hear of him is that once three little boys on their way to school at Athens stopped over night at an inn, of which the innkeeper was also a butcher, and a robber besides. This wicked man killed the boys in the night and threw their bodies into his salting tub. But the very next morning the saint walked in and asked for them, for though he was only Bishop Nicholas then, he knew all about it in some wonderful way. The trembling butcher took him out to the pork barrel; the saint struck the edge of it sharply with his staff and called the boys by name. Out jumped the three little pickles all alive, and of course the wicked butcher was punished and Nicholas became the school-boys' saint.

There is also a story that one night Bishop Nicholas wished to carry a purse of gold to a worthy nobleman who was so proud and so unwilling to have his poverty noticed that it was a difficult matter to make the gift without hurting his feelings. When the house was reached the old noble was to be seen through the window fast asleep by the fire, and without disturbing him good St. Nicholas climbed to the top of the wide chimney and dropped the purse, intending it to fall on the hearth. But as the old man's daughter had hung her father's stockings by the fire to dry, it chanced to fall into one of them. There it

was found the next day and most opportunely provided a marriage portion for the oldest daughter. The story goes on to say that after that whenever one of the noble's daughters was of marrying age he hung up a stocking, — and St. Nicholas's gift was never lacking.

They say that all this happened early in December, and in some countries December 6 is the great day for the children. In Holland, on St. Nicholas Eve, December 5, the children go out with their parents to see the brilliantly decorated shops, and in the doorways of many of them stands the saint, gorgeously dressed and handing to every child who passes a tiny toy or a sweet. No wonder the good saint must needs go to the seashore for a day before his next heavy job of being Santa Claus to all America on the twenty-fifth, — to say nothing of merry England!

At any rate, we find that in a certain seaport of southern Italy it is the sailors' custom on December 6 to take the image of the saint from the beautiful church of St. Nicholas and, with a long procession of boats, carry it far out to sea. Toward nightfall they return and in the glory of the gold and crimson sunset are met on landing by all the townspeople. Hundreds of quaintly dressed pilgrims from the country round join the crowd that welcomes the home-coming saint with songs, bonfires, and torches, and brings him back to his own place.

His next appearance is in those countries where the Greek Church is the national religion. Their Day of St. Nicholas, which is December 6 elsewhere, comes upon what we should call December 19, and the saint is supposed to bring the win-



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AN AMERICAN CHRISTMAS TREE

ter with him. On the frozen river by Peter's city it is celebrated with a skating and sleighing carnival. Lines of track are laid down on the ice like small-sized street-car lines. Tiny cars run here and there along them, back and forth from the smooth ice-fields roped off for sleigh races or skating contests. Perhaps it was in that cold country he found the high cap, the furs, and the coat he wears for his hard work of chimney scrambling and running the reindeer express on the Christmas Eve we know.

Once more after his strenuous American holiday week is over the hard-worked saint appears again. From the little whitewashed villages of Greece north to ice-bound Archangel and east even to Vladivostok the saint swings wearily on thousands of wax-lighted Christmas trees (their Christmas Eve comes, you must remember, thirteen days after ours). But he is a sadly wasted saint by this time—a mere waxen image a few inches long—able only to dance a little at the tip of a branch of a Christmas tree, and that is all he is asked to do. But in some houses you would find him with a queer cotton tassel in the top of his cap, and what happens then is this: some boy or girl comes by, touches his cotton tassel into flame from a lighted taper, and he burns and melts and grows shorter as if he were just an ordinary wax candle until he is all gone.

But in spite of that, in the next December, when the little children in Holland beg their mothers to take them out to see the lighted shops, there he is again with his bag of sweets. And if you want to know what happens to him after that you will only have to read this story over again.

The Befana Fair in Rome

IN Rome the season of making gifts corresponding to our Christmas comes twelve days later, and the gift-bringer would not be called Santa Claus or Saint Nicholas, but Befana, a gruff little old woman. Perhaps she is in some way connected with the old woman of whom the legend is told that she was sweeping out her house when the Three Kings rode by with gifts for the infant Christ. "Come," they said, "and see the *Bambin Gesù*." She said she would when she had finished her sweeping. But though she took her gifts and started, she was too late then, of course, so she gave the presents to good children and bits of charcoal to those who had been naughty. The name is really a short form of Epifania, the Feast of Epiphany, and it is given both to the gift-bringer and to one of the most extraordinary popular festivals ever invented to amuse children and to turn grown people into children. It is a night fair opened every Eve of Epiphany in the great square called Piazza Navona, where long, long ago one of the Roman emperors, Domitian, once had his race-course. In the days just after Christmas workmen begin to bring out from queer underground storerooms all the lumber and other material needed for setting up booths and decorating the square for the Befana. From year to year it lies somewhere, ready for use at a moment's notice, and when needed it is suddenly produced without confusion, marked and numbered, all ready to be put together and regilded, or repainted, or hung with acres of bright-colored draperies. The Romans are masters of the

art of managing public displays and change the empty, windy square as if by magic suddenly into a great oval street of booths enclosing the whole circus-shaped space. At dark on the Eve of the Epiphany the Befana begins. The hundreds of booths are choked with toys, and gleam with thousands of little lights. In the open spaces the moving crowd of children, parents, and grandparents grows closer and closer between sunset and midnight, and every one is splitting the air with some sort of whistle, horn, or trumpet. Noise is the chief need of a successful Befana, and the first thing every one buys who comes must be a tin horn or one of the grotesque little figures made of painted clay, always with a whistle in some part of it. Their very ugliness is attractive, and they are daubed with a kind of bright and harmless paint of which every Roman child remembers the taste so long as he lives. Round and round the crowd moves in a stream of young, old, and middle-aged, all blowing horns and whistles with a ridiculously solemn persistency, bent on making all the noise it is possible to get out of one small toy. Now and then they stop to buy at some booth, or to greet a friend; one group attacks another with a specially strong burst of noise almost too much to stand when shrill whistles are brought close to ears, and there are shouts of laughter when the party which can make the most hideous noise drives off the other half deaf from the din.

In one long-remembered year, in the old English Protestant church about a mile away, the organ was rebuilt and the organist, a practical Anglo-Saxon, had the useless old pipes

sold at the night fair for the benefit of the church. The braying of the high cracked reeds was frightful and never to be forgotten.

Thousands upon thousands of people throng the square; even under the clear winter sky it is not cold; the flaring, smoking, wind-blown torches throw strange shadows down upon the old women who behind the booths sit warming their skinny hands over earthen pots of glowing coals. They look on without a smile on their wrinkled faces while their sons and daughters sell little old women of clay, the very images of their mothers, to passing customers. And there is no confusion, no accident, no trouble, there are no drunken men and no pickpockets. But Romans are not like other people.

The Golden Carol

(Of Melchior, Balthazar, and Gaspar, the Three Kings.)

We saw the light shine out a-far,
On Christmas in the morning,
And straight we knew Christ's Star it was,
Bright beaming in the morning.
Then did we fall on bended knee,
On Christmas in the morning,
And prais'd the Lord, who'd let us see
His glory at its dawning.

Oh! ever thought be of His Name,
On Christmas in the morning,

Who bore for us both grief and shame,
Afflictions sharpest scorning.
And may we die (when death shall come),
On Christmas in the morning,
And see in heav'n, our glorious home,
The Star of Christmas morning.

Babouscka

IT was the night the dear Christ Child came to Bethlehem. In a country far away from Him, an old, old woman named Babouscka sat in her snug little house by her warm fire. The wind was drifting the snow outside and howling down the chimney, but it only made Babouscka's fire burn more brightly.

"How glad I am that I may stay indoors!" said Babouscka, holding her hands out to the bright blaze.

But suddenly she heard a loud rap at her door. She opened it, and her candle shone on three old men standing outside in the snow. Their beards were as white as the snow, and so long that they reached the ground. Their eyes shone kindly in the light of Babouscka's candle, and their arms were full of precious things — boxes of jewels, and sweet-smelling oils, and ointments.

"We have travelled far, Babouscka," they said, "and we stop to tell you of the Baby Prince born this night in Bethlehem. He comes to rule the world and teach all men to be loving and true. We carry Him gifts. Come with us, Babouscka!"

But Babouscka looked at the driving snow, and then inside at her cozy room and the crackling fire. "It is too late for me to go with you, good sirs," she said, "the weather is too cold." She went inside again and shut the door, and the old men journeyed on to Bethlehem without her. But as Babouscka sat by her fire, rocking, she began to think about the little Christ Child, for she loved all babies.

"To-morrow I will go to find Him," she said; "to-morrow, when it is light, and I will carry Him some toys."

So when it was morning Babouscka put on her long cloak, and took her staff, and filled her basket with the pretty things a baby would like, gold balls, and wooden toys, and strings of silver cobwebs — and she set out to find the Christ Child.

But, oh! Babouscka had forgotten to ask the three old men the road to Bethlehem, and they had travelled so far through the night that she could not overtake them. Up and down the roads she hurried, through woods and fields and towns, saying to whomsoever she met: "I go to find the Christ Child. Where does He lie? I bring some pretty toys for His sake."

But no one could tell her the way to go, and they all said, "Farther on, Babouscka, farther on." So she travelled on, and on, and on for years and years — but she never found the little Christ Child.

They say that old Babouscka is travelling still, looking for Him. When it comes Christmas Eve, and the children are lying fast asleep, Babouscka comes softly through the snowy fields and towns, wrapped in her long cloak and carrying her

basket on her arm. With her staff she raps gently at the doors and goes inside and holds her candle close to the little children's faces.

"Is He here?" she asks. "Is the little Christ Child here?" And then she turns sorrowfully away again, crying, "Farther on, farther on." But before she leaves she takes a toy from her basket and lays it beside the pillow for a Christmas gift. "For His sake," she says softly and then hurries on through the years and forever in search of the little Christ Child.

The Three Kings.

IF you had been a child in Provence when Mistral was a boy, you might perhaps have joined the excited party of curly-headed boys and fair-haired girls in hoods and clacking wooden shoes who went with him to meet the Three Kings, the Wise Men from the East, coming to worship the Holy Child on the night before Epiphany. Mistral told of it long afterwards in this way:—

With hearts beating and eyes bright we started forth on the road to Arles, bearing our gifts of welcome, cakes for the Kings, figs for the boy pages, sweet hay for the tired camels. The wind blew cold, the robin and wren hopped shivering in the branches of the leafless trees. The fields were empty except for perhaps an old woman picking up sticks, or a ragged snail-gatherer under the hedge.

"Where are you going so late, my little ones?" some one would ask.

"We go to meet the Kings," we said, singing and laughing, sliding and running along the white, wind-swept road. But the daylight faded, the black, pointed cypress trees hid the bell-tower of Maillane, and the long, white road stretched away empty. . . . Then we met a shepherd, his long, brown cloak held tight around him.

"Have you seen the Kings? Are they still a long way off?"

"Ah! the Kings! You should see them soon. They are not so far away."

Then we set off running again, with our gifts for the Kings and the pages, and handfuls of hay for the camels. The bravest of us flagged a little as a great cloud over the mountain hid the sun, when suddenly a flash of golden splendor and a glory of yellow and crimson shone just where the white road curved from behind the mountain.

"The Kings! The Kings! See their mantles! See the banners! They are coming."

And so we stood amazed; but instead of growing brighter as if the Kings were coming nearer, the glory faded with the sunset and we found ourselves alone in the dark highway.

"Which way did the Kings go?"

"They have gone behind the mountain."

The white owls hooted, the wind was chill, and night-shadows frightened us; so close together with backward glances we hurried toward the village again. The hay we threw away, but the cakes we had brought to give the Kings and the figs for the boy pages—they were comforting. And at home our mothers asked us: "Well, did you see them?"



ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

Bouguereau

"Only a long way off. They went behind the mountain."

"But what road did you take?"

"The road to Arles."

"Ah, my poor lambs — but the Kings never come by that road. They come from the East — you should have taken the Roman road. Ah, the beautiful sight when they entered Mail-lane! the banners and trumpets! the pages leading the camels! But what a show! Now they are gone to the church to offer their adoration. After supper you shall go and see them."

Suppers were swallowed quickly, mine at my grandmother's, and then we all ran to the church. Sure enough, high above the manger hung the glittering star, and on bended knees before the Holy Child were the Three Kings — Gaspard, in a crimson cloak, with gifts of gold; Melchior, in yellow, offering incense; and Balthasar, in a mantle blue, presenting a vase of myrrh. How reverently we admired the gayly dressed pages who carried the Kings' long trains, and the great camels whose heads and humps rose high above St. Joseph's ass and the oxen! . . .

Many a time since those days I have been on the Arles road at this season when the robin and wren haunt the hawthorne hedges. The snail-gatherer still searches under the hedge and the owls hoot in the winter evening. But I see no more in the glory of the sunset clouds the banners of the Kings.

"Which way did they go, the Kings?"

"Behind the mountain."

Christmas Peace

THAT sweetly prophetic evening silence, before the great feast of Good-Will, does not come over everything each year, even in a lonely cottage on an abandoned farm in Connecticut, than which you cannot possibly imagine anything more silent or more remote from the noise of the world. Sometimes it rains in torrents just on that night, sometimes it blows a raging gale that twists the leafless birches and elms and hickory trees like dry grass and bends the dark firs and spruces as if they were feathers, and you can hardly be heard unless you shout, for the howling and screaming and whistling of the blast.

But now and then, once in four or five years perhaps, the feathery snow lies a foot deep, fresh-fallen, on the still country side and in the woods; and the waxing moon sheds her large light on all, and Nature holds her breath to wait for the happy day and tries to sleep, but cannot from sheer happiness and peace. Indoors, the fire is glowing on the wide hearth, a great bed of coals that will last all night and be enough, because it is not bitter weather, but only cold and clear and still, as it should be; or if there is only a poor stove, the iron door is open and a comfortable, cheery red light shines out from within upon the battered iron plate and the wooden floor beyond; and the older people sit around it, not saying much, and thinking with their hearts rather than with their heads; but small boys and girls know that interesting things have been happening in the kitchen all the afternoon, and are rather glad that the supper

was not very good, because there will be more room for good things to-morrow; and the grown-ups and the children have made up any little differences of opinion they may have had before supper time, because Good-Will must reign, and reign alone, like Alexander; so that there is nothing at all to regret, and nothing hurts anybody any more, and they are all happy in just waiting for King Christmas to open the door softly and make them all great people in his kingdom. But if it is the right sort of house, he is already looking in through the window, to be sure that every one is all ready for him, and that nothing has been forgotten.





